

Houston Health Department (HHD) Laboratory Monkeypox Specimen Collection and Submission Guidelines

Testing Approval by Health Department Epidemiologist

1. If your facility has a suspected monkeypox case, always consult your local or state health department first. The contact information for the Health Departments in the region is on the last page of this document. If you are not sure which health department to call, you can contact Texas Department of State Health Services Health (DSHS) Service Region 6/5 South at 713-767-3000.
2. Your local (or state) health department epidemiologist (EPI) will conduct an investigation to determine if monkeypox testing is warranted. If monkeypox testing is approved, a case number may be assigned. The health department EPI must contact **HHD LRN laboratory at 832-393-3959**, provide the case number if available, and make arrangement for testing.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Gown
2. Gloves
3. Eye protection (i.e., goggles or a face shield that covers the front and sides of the face)
4. NIOSH-approved particulate respirator equipped with N95 filters or higher
5. Sequence for Putting on Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):
<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/PPE-Sequence.pdf>

Materials

1. Dry sterile synthetic swabs (including, but not limited to polyester, nylon, or Dacron; Do not use cotton swabs) with a plastic, wood, or thin aluminum shaft
 - 2 swabs per lesion
 - In general, sample 2-3 lesions per patient, if less than 2 lesions can be found on the whole body, minimum 1 lesion (2 swabs) per patient
2. Sterile 1.5-or 2-mL screw-capped tube with O-ring **OR** sterile container with gasket seal
 - 1 tube (or container) per swab, minimum 2 tubes/swabs per patient
 - If you do not have empty sterile tubes (preferred), you can use viral transport media (VTM) tubes. Do not use universal transport media (UTM) tubes. Specimens submitted in UTM will be rejected.

Procedure

(Link to NETEC Monkeypox Specimen Collection Video: <https://youtu.be/kEYfW9rVmRl>)

1. Choose 2-3 lesions to collect specimens from, preferably from different locations on the body or from lesions which differ in appearance.
2. Swab the lesion vigorously to collect adequate DNA (otherwise you may get an inconclusive result). It is not necessary to de-roof the lesion before swabbing. Collect two swabs from each lesion.
3. Break off end of applicator of each swab into one empty sterile tube or container (preferred) or VTM tube.
4. Label each tube (or container) with:
 - Patient first and last name
 - Patient date of birth mm/dd/yyyy
 - Date and time of collection
 - Anatomical site of lesion (hand, foot, genitals, etc.). If more than one lesion is sampled from the same body part, clarify the location by adding an anatomical marker (hand left or L, hand right or R, etc.), or if necessary, by adding a number after the sampling site to distinguish different lesions (hand-L- 1, hand-L2, etc.)
 - Assigned case # if available

IMPROPERLY LABELED SPECIMENS WILL BE REJECTED

5. Refrigerate (2 - 8°C) specimens within one hour of collection. Specimens should be sent to HHD LRN Laboratory within 24 hours when feasible. Refrigerated specimens must be received at the LRN Laboratory within 5 days of collection to ensure testing is completed.
6. Fill out HHD Laboratory Test Request Form, using one form for each lesion.
 - Make sure that lesion designation information (e.g., hand-L-1, hand-L-2, etc.) is filled out on the form for the specific lesion
 - All required information must be filled out
 - Information on the form must match information on the specimen label.
7. Pack the specimens as UN3373, Biological Substance Category B by a person trained in packaging and shipping (online training is available at: <https://cdc.train.org/cdctrain/course/1092665/>), include the completed test request form, and ship with sufficient cold packs to HHD LRN Laboratory (address: 2250 Holcombe Blvd, Houston, TX 77030. **ATTN: Molecular Diagnostics/Monkeypox**).

Monkeypox Specimen Receiving Hours and Testing Turnaround Time

1. HHD LRN Laboratory receives monkeypox specimens **Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 7:00 pm, and Saturday, 9:00 am to 6:00 pm** at the specimen drop-off window located at the rear of the building.
2. After hours specimen receiving is available. Check in with the building security guard at the front desk. You will be escorted to the designated refrigerator.
3. Turnaround time for a result is 24-48 hours after receipt at the LRN Lab.

Monkeypox Virus-Specific Characterization Testing at CDC

If the result for one of the swabs tested by HHD LRN Laboratory is positive, the second swab from the same lesion may be sent to CDC for monkeypox virus-specific characterization testing. HHD LRN laboratory is not required to send all positive samples to CDC. Characterization testing turnaround time at CDC can be two weeks or longer, depending on specimen arrival date, time, and testing volume.

Houston Area Health Department Contact Information:

Texas Department of State Health Services Health Service Region 6/5 South Phone: (713) 767-3000 After Hrs. (800) 270-3128 Fax: (713) 767-3006 https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/region6-5/default.shtm	Harris County Public Health Phone: (713) 439-6000 After Hrs. (713) 755-5050 Fax: (713) 439-6306 http://publichealth.harriscountytexas.gov
Houston Health Department Phone: (832) 393-5080 (24 hrs. #) Fax: (832) 393-5232 www.houstontx.gov/health/index.html	Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Phone: (348) 481-6500 After Hrs. (832) 612-7761 Fax: (832) 471-1817 https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/government/departments/health-and-human-services
Galveston County Health District Phone: (409)938-2322 After Hrs. (888)241-0442 Fax: (409)938-2399 www.gchd.org	Montgomery County Public Health Department Phone: (936) 523-5026 After Hrs. (800) 825-9754 Fax: (936) 539-9272 https://mcpd-tx.org
Brazoria County Health Department Phone: (979) 864-2168 After Hrs. (800) 511-1632 Fax: (979) 864-3694 https://www.brazoriacountytexas.gov/departments/health-department	Chambers County Health Department Phone: (409) 267-2731 After Hrs. (409) 267-9862 Fax: (409) 267-4276 https://www.co.chambers.tx.us/page/health.department
Beaumont Public Health Department Phone: (409) 654-3603 After Hrs. (409) 998-3389 FAX: (409) 832-4270 sherry.ulmer@beaumonttexas.gov	Hardin County Health Department/Orange County Telephone: (409) 209-5363 After Hrs. (409) 659-7759 Fax: (409) 246-4373 or (409) 246-5263 Christina.richard@co.hardin.tx.us
Port Arthur Public Health Department Phone: (409) 983-8832 Judith.smith@portarthurtexas.gov	