

Houston Health Department (HHD) Laboratory Ebola/Marburg Specimen Collection and Submission Guidelines

Testing Approval Is Required for [Ebola](#)/[Marburg](#) Testing (click virus name for CDC website)

1. If your facility has a suspected Ebola/Marburg case, always call 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 (DSHS) Health Service Region (HSR) 6/5 South at 713-767-3000.
2. Your local (or state) health department epidemiologist (EPI) will conduct an initial investigation and consult CDC (770-488-7100) to determine whether Ebola/Marburg testing is warranted. No specimens will be tested by HHD laboratory unless approved by CDC.
3. The health department EPI should inform HHD LRN laboratory Testing Contact Ricardo Quijano at 832-393-3926 if Ebola/Marburg testing is approved.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Infection Control and Prevention

1. Staff who collect specimens from Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) should wear appropriate PPE and should refer to [Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment To Be Used by Healthcare Workers During Management of Patients with Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers \(VHFs\) in U.S. Hospitals, including procedures for Putting on \(Donning\) and Removing \(Doffing\) PPE.](#)
2. For guidance on infection control, see [CDC infection control guidance.](#)

Specimen Collection

1. If it is determined that testing for Ebola/Marburg virus is indicated, collect two tubes of whole blood using plastic collection tubes (EDTA purple top collection tubes preferred) for testing.
2. Do NOT use glass containers or heparinized tubes.
3. Label each tube with patient's name, date of birth, test requested, and date of collection.
4. For each tube, collect at least 4 mL whole blood for an adult and at least 1 mL whole blood for a child.
5. Do not separate and remove serum or plasma from the primary collection container.
6. Store both specimens at 2-8°C before shipping.
7. For the specimen to be sent to HHD Laboratory, fill out HHD Laboratory "Special Pathogen Testing" test request form.
8. For the specimen to be sent to CDC, fill out and include both the [CDC Form 50.34 \[PDF – 1 page\]](#) and [Viral Special Pathogens Branch Specimen Submission Information \[PDF – 2 pages\]](#) per [CDC's instructions.](#)
9. If the patient's symptoms have been present for <3 days, a second set of samples collected 72 hours after onset of symptoms is required to definitively rule out Ebola.

Packaging and Shipping of Suspected Ebola/Marburg Specimens to HHD Laboratory and CDC

1. One specimen will be shipped to HHD Laboratory and the other specimen will be shipped to CDC for confirmation testing.
2. Each specimen should be packaged and shipped (or transported) as Category A infectious substances in accordance with the DOT's [Hazardous Materials Regulations \(HMR\) 49 CFR 171-180](#) by submitting entity personnel who is trained and certified in compliance with Department Of Transportation (DOT) or the [International Air Transport Association](#) (IATA).
3. Each specimen should be packaged following the [basic triple packaging system](#), which consists of (1) a primary container (a sealable specimen container) wrapped with absorbent material, (2) a secondary container (watertight, leak-proof), and (3) an outer shipping package.
4. Do **NOT** package suspected Ebola specimens as Category B infectious substances as you would for regular diagnostic specimens. It is not safe.
5. One specimen should be shipped to HHD Laboratory cold (2 - 8°C):
 - a. Ensure the specimen is packed to maintain temperature of 2 - 8°C
 - b. Within the outer ice chest (e.g., styrofoam), place sufficient ice packs to surround the sealed secondary packaging on all sides and provide further insulation to maintain temperature of 2 - 8°C during transit.
 - c. Ship to:
ATTN: Ricardo Quijano (Phone: 832-393-3926)
Ebola/Marburg Testing
Houston Health Department Laboratory
2250 Holcombe Blvd; Houston TX 77030
6. The other specimen should be shipped to CDC frozen (< -20°C) on Dry Ice:
 - a. Follow [CDC's instructions](#) on packing and shipping suspected Ebola/Marburg specimens for confirmation at CDC.
 - b. Ensure the specimen is packed to maintain temperature of <-20°C
 - c. Within the outer ice chest (e.g., styrofoam), place sufficient dry ice to surround the sealed secondary packaging on all sides and provide further insulation to maintain temperature of <-20°C during transit.
7. More detailed information regarding testing arrangements will be discussed during consultation calls among the submitting entity, local and/or state health departments and CDC.

Testing Turnaround Time

Turnaround time for a result is 6 to 8 hours after receipt at HHD Laboratory unless repeat testing is required.

Houston Area Health Department Contact Information:

<p>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</p>	<p>Harris County Public Health Phone: (713) 439-6000 After Hrs. (713) 755-5050 Fax: (713) 439-6306 http://publichealth.harriscountytx.gov</p>
<p>Houston Health Department Phone: (832) 393-5080 (24 hrs. #) Fax: (832) 393-5232 www.houstontx.gov/health/index.html</p>	<p>Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Phone: (348) 481-6500 After Hrs. (832) 612-7761 Fax: (832) 471-1817 https://www.fortbendcountytx.gov/government/departments/health-and-human-services</p>
<p>Galveston County Health District Phone: (409) 938-2322 After Hrs. (888) 241-0442 Fax: (409) 938-2399 www.gchd.org</p>	<p>Montgomery County Public Health Department Phone: (936) 523-5026 After Hrs. (800) 825-9754 Fax: (936) 539-9272 https://mcphd-tx.org</p>
<p>Brazoria County Health Department Phone: (979) 864-1166 After Hrs. (800) 511-1632 Fax: (979) 864-3694 https://www.brazoriacountytx.gov/departments/health-department</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Beaumont Public Health Department Phone: (409) 654-3603 After Hrs. (409) 998-3389 FAX: (409) 832-4270 sherry.ulmer@beaumonttexas.gov</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Port Arthur Public Health Department Phone: (409) 983-8832 Judith.smith@portarthurtx.gov</p>	