



State Tuberculosis Laboratory Service Guidance



The following guidance is provided by the Florida Department of Health, Tuberculosis Control Section (TBCS) and Bureau of Public Health Laboratories (BPHL) for local health departments and community providers submitting clinical specimens to the state TB laboratory located in Jacksonville, Florida for TB testing.

TB Lab Contact Information and Hours of Operation

- The lab is open Monday through **Friday** from 8am to 5pm.
- In extenuating circumstances, the lab is available outside of these hours.
- To inquire about a specimen that has been submitted, call 904-791-1630.

Ordering Specimen Containers:

- To order specimen containers, contact the shipping department at the state lab: 904-791-1571.
- If you are using the paper order form available on the website, please complete the form (legibly) and fax to 904-791-1637.
- To access the Jacksonville supply form, please visit: https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/public-health-laboratories/forms-publications/documents/jax_supply_order_form_october_2021002b.pdf

Please allow seven to ten business days to process orders.

Cost of Services:

TB services are provided at no charge.

Lab Submission Form Instructions:

The Clinical Lab Submission Form (lab requisition form) is available online under the Test Menu submission forms at: www.FloridaPublicHealthLab.com

- Complete the patient and healthcare provider information sections of the requisition form if not submitting test order via Electronic Lab Order.
- In the specimen information section, record the date of sample collection and check the specimen type (s) (e.g.: CSF, Sputum, Bronchial Wash, Tissue or other).
- “Mycobacteriology” section, indicate if the specimen has been processed at a lab or is a raw specimen by marking “processed” or “not processed”, respectively.
- Mark 3100 - AFB Smear/Culture.
- Mark 3105 - Nucleic Acid Amplification for TB (Real-Time PCR) on the first specimen
 - CDC recommends that NAAT is performed on an initial respiratory specimen from each client with signs and symptoms of pulmonary TB for whom a diagnosis of TB is being considered but has not yet been established, and for whom the test result would alter initiation of MTBC therapy, treatment plan and TB control activities.

- **Note:** First-time AFB Smear Positive specimens will reflex to Real-time PCR if not ordered.
- Laboratories should work with their infectious disease Physicians to determine whether a person is a first time TB suspect and if NAAT is warranted.
- Additional tests can be performed on subsequent specimens but must be pre-approved by a TB Physician's Network MD or via a regionally assigned TB Nursing Consultant for Department of Health, Tuberculosis Control Section, by calling 1-800-4TB-INFO or 561-266-6632. *A second PCR is helpful for early diagnosis of TB disease as well as for factoring into decision-making related to isolation precautions.

Special Instructions Concerning Specimens:

Sputum:

- Ensure patients are educated on proper sputum collection techniques and the type of sample desired (from the lungs, not saliva), to ensure the best quality specimen possible. Sputum induction with hypertonic saline solution or distilled water should be considered for any person reporting difficulty producing a sample.
- Do your best to collect at least 5mL of sputum in the clear 50mL specimen collection tube, including sputum induction with hypertonic saline solution if needed. The lab will accept less than 5mL but will include a disclaimer indicating the results may not be reliable.
- If the specimen is induced, write "induced" on the submittal form and specimen tube.

Other Specimens:

- Urine (unprocessed) must be stored and shipped refrigerated. Must arrive within the temperature range of 2-8°C. or it will be rejected.
- Blood specimens collected into heparin (green top) or SPS tubes must be stored and shipped at room temperature. **Do not refrigerate or freeze.** Coagulated blood and blood collected in EDTA/purple top tube are unacceptable specimens.
- Gastric aspirates (Unprocessed) must be neutralized with 100mg of sodium carbonate within 4 hours of collection.
- Stool samples:
 - Collect a stool sample into a clean container (e.g., a collection pan, or clean plastic wrap draped over the toilet bowl with semi-loose tension)
 - If possible collect stool from the first daily bowel movement.
 - Transfer the specimen to a sterile 50 mL conical tube (send at least 2-3 grams/5-10 mL of stool).
 - Ship samples as soon as possible at 2°C-8°C/35.6°F-46.4°F to reduce growth of contaminating bacteria. If unable to ship the same day, keep the specimen stored at these temperatures until shipped. **Note: standard refrigerator temperatures should be kept under 40°F, ideally between 35-38°F.**
- Tissue Block specimens (biopsy specimens in paraffin) require approval prior to submission to the state lab. Please contact Maria Gomez at 561-266-6632 or email maria.gomez@flhealth.gov.

Additional Handling Instructions:

- Specimens should be less than 7 days old at the time they are received by the state lab. Specimens older than 7 days may not produce a valid/reliable result.
- Ensure the specimen container is appropriately labeled with patient identifiers and date specimen was collected. Make sure the cap of the 50mL collection tube is securely closed.
 - **Note: Any specimen not labeled with patient name and one other unique identifier (i.e. date of birth) will be rejected**
- If using state provided canisters, follow instructions below.
 - Place the 50mL specimen tube on top of cotton balls or tissue inside of the silver canister to protect the specimen and absorb leakage. Secure the lid tightly.
 - Wrap the completed lab submission form/requisition around the silver canister and place it inside of the cardboard tube. Secure the lid tightly.
- Send specimens to the state lab as soon as possible after they have been collected. Please do not batch specimens. CDC recommends that AFB Specimens should be received at the testing lab within 1 day.
- If the specimen cannot be shipped the same day, refrigerate the specimen until it is ready to be shipped to the state lab (**do not freeze**).

Shipping Instructions:

- Packages are to be prepared by trained shippers in accordance with 49 CFR 173.199.
 - Culture isolates of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* fall under the category A designation.
 - Specimens collected from suspect tuberculosis patients fall under the category B designation.
- Request UN3373 overpack bags for shipping from your preferred carrier, if needed. Box outer packaging does not require an overpack bag, but canisters (cylinders) provided by the state lab do.
 - Most providers ship canisters via UPS or FedEx overnight, in overpack bags provided by the courier. For Saturday arrival, **use Priority Overnight**, delivery guaranteed by 10:30 am, as the shipping area closes early on Saturday (before noon).
- Ship to:
 - Bureau of Public Health Laboratories, Attn: TB Lab
1217 North Pearl Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32202

The following is an example of a UN3373 overpack bag for shipping.



E-Lab Services

WebLIMS is available to external DOH healthcare providers. Interested providers should visit the Florida Public Health Laboratory website at: www.FloridaPublicHealthLab.com and complete the required forms.