

Measles Virus Laboratory and Specimen Collection Standing Order Template for Suspected Cases

Instructions for Local Health Department Staff

Use the language in this standing order template to create a customized standing order exclusively for your agency. Your customized standing order should include a header with your agency name, effective start date, and expiration date. Review the standing order at least annually and obtain Medical Director's signature

STANDING ORDER:

BACKGROUND

Testing for Measles virus in persons with high risk is a key component of disease investigation, control, and response for measles. *List Agency Name Here* will send measles virus specimens to the North Carolina State Laboratory for Public Health when testing is approved by the NC Communicable Disease Branch Epi-On-Call. For all other testing, specimens will be sent to *list reference lab name here*.

ASSESSMENT

Subjective Findings:

Individual seeks care at *List Agency Name Here* and reports symptoms consistent with measles.

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Conjunctivitis
- Rash

Objective Findings

The registered nurse should collect specimens for Measles PCR testing by standing order if the following objective findings are present:

- Individual displays signs or symptoms compatible with measles (fever $\geq 101.0^{\circ}\text{F}$; cough; coryza; conjunctivitis; generalized, maculopapular rash starting at hairline or face, spreading down to trunk and extremities)

AND

The individual meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Is unvaccinated for measles and has no other documented evidence of immunity
- Has travel history to areas with known transmission
- Is epi-linked to a confirmed case

PLAN OF CARE

Precautions and Contraindications

Before implementing this Standing Order:

- 1) Review "Criteria for Notifying the Medical Provider" under Nursing Actions. If patient meets any of those criteria immediately consult with agency medical provider for orders on how to proceed.

Implementation ***LHD should edit this section based on the testing available!***

A registered nurse employed or contracted by *List Agency Name Here* may collect by standing order the following specimens for Measles virus for individuals meeting the subjective and objective findings listed above:

The LHD must indicate what type of specimen will be collected. If there are multiple options, the criteria for each must be listed (i.e. when you'd collect nasopharyngeal versus oropharyngeal)

- A) Nasopharyngeal swab - preferred (SLPH only performs PCR on nasopharyngeal swabs)
- B) Oropharyngeal swab - SLPH will send specimens they do not perform to CDC/Reference Lab
- C) IgM Serology - SLPH will send IgM specimens to CDC/Reference Lab)

Nursing Actions

1. Adhere to standard, contact, and airborne precautions while collecting respiratory specimens
2. Specimen Collection:
 - a. Use swabs with a synthetic tip (e.g. polyester or Dacron®) and an aluminum or plastic shaft
 - b. Specimens must be in either Viral Transport Media (VTM) preferred or Universal Transport Media (UTM) SLPH will send specimens in UTM to CDC/Reference Lab
 - c. Swab the patient according to testing kit instructions
 - *LHD should insert specific collection steps here, based on the collection kit instructions and the type of specimen(s) to be collected*
3. Educate the patient as follows:
 - a. Advise symptomatic individuals of the need to self-isolate until measles infection is ruled out or until released from isolation.
 - b. Inform patient of how they will be notified of results
 - c. Provide patient with information about how potential contacts will be identified and followed. Contact identification may include extensive history of patient activity where any person shared air space with the case during the infectious period (travel, healthcare visits, attendance at school or child-care, etc.) to determine locations of potential exposure.

CRITERIA FOR NOTIFYING THE PATIENT'S PHYSICIAN:

Contact the patient's physician immediately in the event of an adverse reaction or unexpected symptoms, complications or other situations occur following the collection of specimens.

REFERENCES:

1. Measles Investigation Overview – North Carolina Communicable Disease Branch. Retrieved April 9, 2025 from https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/lhds/manuals/cd/measles/Measles_Investigation_Guidelines.pdf
2. Measles Specimen Collection and Shipment – North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health. Published March 17, 2025. Retrieved April 9, 2025, from <https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/epidemiology/communicable-disease/ncslph-measles-specimen-collection-and-shipment-guidancepdf/download?attachment>