Considerations for Handling Potential SARS-CoV-2 Samples

These considerations do not supersed any regulatory or country-specific in your locale.

Laboratory practices, techniques, and administrative controls build upon the previous level. Additional controls are indicated at each level.

BSL2

- Whole blood, serum and urine
- Synthetic messenger RNA-based or recombinant protein-based products
- Rapid respiratory testing performed at the point of care (no nucleic acid isolation)
- Viral vector-based products
- Using automated instruments and analyzers (if aerosol containment is a feature) some devices might be older and not contained
- Staining and microscopic analysis of fixed smears
- Examination of bacterial cultures
- Pathologic examination and processing of formalin-fixed or otherwise inactivated tissues – Inactivation methods should be validated
- Molecular analysis of extracted nucleic acid preparations
- Final packaging of specimens for transport to diagnostic laboratories for additional testing – Specimens should already be in a sealed, decontaminated primary container
- Using inactivated specimens, such as specimens in nucleic acid extraction buffer
- Performing electron microscopic studies with glutaraldehyde-fixed grids

*CDC Source*

Additional procedures

- Cytometry – fixed samples

**Laboratory Practices and Technique**

- Good (Standard) Microbiological Practices
- Access to the laboratory is restricted when work is being conducted
- All procedures in which infectious aerosols or splashes may be created are conducted in BSCs or other physical containment equipment
- Use safety cups whenever possible to avoid exposure to aerosols

**Primary & Secondary Barriers and PPE**

- PPE: gown/ Lab coat, single gloves, surgical mask, eye protection, face shield
- Work behind plexiglass screen in an isolated designated area (minimum)
- Notify others in the lab
- Work with samples done over a plastic-backed benchtop pad
- Surface decontamination at every step using EPA List N disinfectants and contact times
- Potentially infectious materials must be placed in a durable, leak proof container during collection, handling, processing, storage, or transport within a facility
- BSCs, if available, are properly maintained and certified
- Mechanical ventilation systems that provide an inward flow of air without recirculation to spaces outside of the laboratory (recommended)
- A method for decontaminating all laboratory wastes should be available in the facility

**Administrative Controls:**

- Training and competency verification on donning and doffing required PPE
- Training and competency verification for each procedure performed
- Laboratory personnel have specific training in handling pathogenic agents and are supervised by scientists competent in handling infectious agents and associated procedures
- Occupational health – mandatory reporting of any symptoms, any laboratory exposure
  - consider baseline blood, baseline questionnaire, emergency wallet card
  - consider review of COVID-19 vaccination status
- Demonstrated competency on working in a BSC (if available)

**BSL2 with BSL3 practices**

- Aliquoting and/or diluting specimens
- Inoculating bacterial or mycological culture media
- Performing diagnostic tests that do not involve propagation of viral agents in vitro or in vivo
- Nucleic acid extraction procedures involving potentially infected specimens
- Preparation and chemical- or heat-fixing of smears for microscopic analysis

*CDC Source*

Additional procedures

- Respiratory samples and secretions
- Stool***
- Cytometry – non-fixed samples
- Inactivated virus lysate
- Work with ANY sample that may produce an aerosol

**Laboratory Practices and Technique**

- Good (Standard) Microbiological Practices
  - Follow BSL3 practices and procedures according to CDC BMBL 6th ed.
  - Laboratory personnel must receive specific training in handling pathogenic and potentially lethal agents and must be supervised by scientists competent in handling infectious agents and associated procedures

**Primary & Secondary Barriers and PPE**

- All procedures involving the manipulation of infectious materials must be conducted within a BSC, or other physical containment devices
- Respiratory protection is required (N95 or PAPR/CAPR)
- Autoclave waste before disposal
- HEPA filtration of exhaust air is recommended for certain situations**

**Transfer of samples outside BSL3 based on risk assessment by biosafety officer**

- Ensure lids are tight
- Decontaminate outside of tubes
- Wrap sample with absorbent material
- Individually place into zip-lock bag
- Seal zip-lock bag and change gloves
- Add all wrapped samples into second bag
- Wrap bagged samples in ample packaging and place into designated carrier, firmly attach lid

**Occupational health**

- mandatory reporting of any symptoms, any laboratory exposure
  - consider baseline blood, baseline questionnaire, emergency wallet card
  - consider review of COVID-19 vaccination status

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