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| **MA Public Health Laboratory Frequently Asked Questions** | **Ebola virus**  **November 25, 2015** |
| **William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute**, 305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 | |
| ***Note:*** *All information in this fact sheet is subject to update at any time. Updates will be posted as new information warrants.*  **Introduction**  To provide clinical laboratory support and guidance for diagnostic testing of a suspect case of hemorrhagic fever due to Ebola virus disease (EVD), the MA State Public Health Laboratory (MA-PHL) at the Hinton State Laboratory Institute includes guidance herein for sample types, specimen submission forms, and packaging & shipping of specimens. Any suspect case of EVD or individual identified as having potential contact with a case of EVD must first be immediately reported to the local board of health or health department, as well as, MA DPH. Consult current [CDC travel advisories](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices).  **What criteria are currently used for a patient under investigation (PUI) for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)?**  **Clinical criteria:** includes fever of >100.4 °F, and additional symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or unexplained hemorrhage, **AND**  **Epidemiologic risk factors:** within the past 3 weeks before the onset of symptoms, such as contact with blood or other body fluids of a patient known to have or suspected to have EVD; residence in–or travel to–an area where EVD transmission is active; participation in funeral and burial rituals, or direct handling of bats, rodents, or primates from disease-endemic areas. Refer to the [CDC website](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/case-definition.html) for current travel-related info.  **What types of specimens should I collect for Ebola diagnostic testing at the MA-PHL?**  **Specimen type(s) approved for FDA Experimental Use Approval (EUA) Ebola PCR:** Draw two plastic tubes of whole blood (≥ 4mL) preserved with EDTA (purple top) or plasma (≥ 4mL) preserved with EDTA (white top). Triple package at 4°C for courier pickup by MA-PHL.  **Specimen type(s) for Ebola serology:** Specimens other than blood may be submitted following a CDC consult (770-488-7100). Do not centrifuge, open collection tubes, aliquot specimens, or submit specimens in glass containers or heparin (green) tubes. Triple package at 4°C for courier pickup by MA-PHL.  **What is the test turnaround time for the MA-PHL Ebola PCR test?**  A presumptive PCR result indicating the presence or absence of Ebola Zaire RNA will be reported in < 4 hours from specimen receipt. A duplicate sample may be simultaneously shipped to the CDC for other comprehensive testing. CDC typically reports results within 24 hours of receipt.  **What specimen submission forms should I use to submit a specimen to the MA-PHL?**  Standard labeling should be applied for each specimen (i.e., two identifiers). Use the [MA-PHL specimen submission form](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/laboratory-sciences/general-submission-form.pdf) and fill in “Ebola PCR” as the test request.  **Should routine testing of specimens be disrupted or discontinued?**  No. Consistent with CDC guidelines, DPH recommends that clinical facilities continue to provide routine testing of patient samples as long as strict adherence to proper PPE usage is followed. Following MA-PHL’s presumptive Ebola results, CDC and state health officials will consult with the healthcare personnel to answer specimen handling /testing specific to the patient’s needs and facility capabilities. The [CDC website](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safe-specimen-management.html) has detailed information on how US clinical laboratories can safely manage routine testing of specimens from patient under investigation (PUI) for Ebola virus disease.  **How should the sample be packaged for courier to the MA-PHL?**  Specimens from a suspect patient must be packaged as a Category A agent.  The submitter must contact MA-PHL staff directly for a packaging consultation (24/7) at 617-590-6390 prior to submission of samples for Ebola diagnostic testing. Specimens collected for EVD testing should be packaged and shipped without attempting to open collection tubes or aliquot specimens.  [Click here](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-specimen-collection-submission-patients-suspected-infection-ebola.html) for details for packaging.  **Note:** clinical labs should maintain the capability for at least one laboratory staff member to be certified to package and ship Category A agents. | |