



Overview

- COVID testing can occur through two venues: public health laboratories and private laboratories.
- Providers take a specimen with a collection kit: a swab and a tube of viral transport media.
- The lab conducts the test using a testing kit, which is a specific lab supply. Labs need extraction kits and reagents to test. The extraction kits are used to pull RNA out of the specimen and the reagents are chemicals that detect the virus if it is present.

Comparison of Public Health and Commercial Laboratory Testing

	Public Health Testing	Private Testing
Who can be tested?	Public health testing focuses on those most at risk or testing that aids in public health surveillance. A person must have symptoms plus a risk factor: recently being in an area where the virus is spreading, contact with a case, risk of poor outcomes (age, medical condition), or hospitalization.	There are no specific criteria for testing via a private lab, it's simply ordered at a doctor's discretion. Some private lab efforts may have their own additional criteria to ensure targeted efforts.
Who collects the specimen?	A provider at a doctor's office, testing location, or hospital. For investigations, sometimes local health departments will collect the specimen.	A provider at a doctor's office, testing location, or hospital.
Where does the testing take place?	At one of nine Public Health labs located regionally throughout the state. The tenth Public Health lab is standing up week of March 22, 2020.	At private and hospital lab locations in Texas and other states. DSHS is aware of testing availability through ARUP, CPL, LabCorp, Mayo and Quest. Hospitals are also testing.
How fast are test results?	After receipt of specimen, 24 - 72 hours	It depends on the provider. Some labs ship their specimens out of state.
Does an initial positive result have to be tested by another lab?	No. Texas public health labs are validated by CDC to run the test. When a Texas public health lab reports a positive, the result is final.	Sometimes. When a private lab first begins to test, their results are confirmed by a peer lab for 5 positives and 5 negatives. After that, when they report a positive, the result is final.
How does DSHS get the test results?	From local health departments. In some cases, DSHS receives the results direct.	From laboratories. DSHS is working to allow some facilities/providers to submit direct.
What's the capacity?	A minimum capacity of 1,600 results per week and can test as many as 600 specimens per day.	DSHS doesn't have data on overall private lab capacity. However, DSHS is receiving over 1,000 private lab reports daily, and this number is on the rise.
Can the capacity increase?	Yes. Public health labs can surge capacity for response to specific outbreaks. Also, recent CDC changes have doubled the number of people who can be tested at once and allowed labs to use high-throughput platforms that increase the number of tests that can be run a day.	Yes. Private lab capacity continues to increase to meet the demand, as evidenced by the number of private labs coming online and reporting results to DSHS.
Are there any supply issues?	Yes. Collection kits, extraction kits, and reagents are on back order.	Yes. Collection kits (swabs and vital transport media) are on back order.