

To:       UPHS Physicians and Staff

From:   The Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Date:   June 30, 2020

**Re:      Use of Anterior Nares (Nasal) Swabs for SARS-CoV-2 Testing**

Anterior nares (nasal) swabs are now the preferred specimen source for SARS-CoV-2 testing at the COVID-19 testing sites for both symptomatic patients and patients undergoing pre-procedural testing. This specimen type allows for increased patient comfort and expands the pool of available staff to perform testing. Anterior nares swabs are considered an acceptable specimen for SARS-CoV-2 by the FDA, CDC and the testing guidelines from the Infectious Disease Society of America and studies indicate comparable performance in comparison to nasopharyngeal swabs for detection of SARS-CoV-2. Anterior nares swabs are now the default specimen source for outpatient SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR orders.

Please note that at this time anterior nares swabs cannot be used to test for other respiratory viruses (i.e. Influenza). Nasopharyngeal swabs will continue to be the preferred specimen source for inpatients, and patients seen in the emergency department, in order to facilitate additional respiratory virus testing that may be more commonly indicated in this patient population.

Please call the laboratory with questions (1-800-PENN-LAB).