



January 13, 2021

Updated CDC Guidance for Specimen Submission for Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your participation, support, and continued public health service in establishing the National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3) System. Since its launch, NS3 has proven successful in providing important SARS-CoV-2 baseline strain surveillance information, increasing publicly available viral sequence data, and establishing a representative repository of virus isolates for further characterization.

The recent emergence of unique SARS-CoV-2 variants of interest necessitates increasing the number of NS3 specimens provided to CDC at this time. Sequencing and characterizing additional specimens will facilitate earlier identification of SARS-CoV-2 variants of interest nationally and allow for more complete virus characterization. In addition to increasing regular submission of NS3 specimens, we are also asking for your participation in enhanced surveillance activities to more rapidly characterize specific variants of interest. Your assistance will play an important role in detecting and tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants of interest to inform public health decision making at local and national levels.

Taken together, the increase in NS3 specimens and enhanced surveillance activities are especially important for monitoring SARS-CoV-2 and assessing the impact of variant viruses on current vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and overall public health.

Attached you will find:

- **National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**
- **National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3) Submissions to CDC for SARS-CoV-2 Positive Samples [Appendix 1]**
- **CDC Recommended Number of National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3) Specimens for Biweekly Submission to CDC by Jurisdiction [Appendix 2]**
- **Enhanced Surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 [Appendix 3]**

For technical guidance or sequencing-related questions for SARS-CoV-2, please contact the SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing Team at sarsseqshipping@cdc.gov. For general questions on the national sequence-based surveillance strategy for SARS-CoV-2, please contact Ben Silk at ekj8@cdc.gov. For questions on the SPHERES consortium, or for broader genomics support, please contact Duncan MacCannell at fms2@cdc.gov.

Sincerely,

Henry Walke
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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention