



California Department of Public Health  
Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory

January 2020



HEPATITIS A VIRUS TESTING GUIDANCE

Only patients with an HAV IgM-positive test result and symptoms consistent with hepatitis will be tested.

Testing Method	Appropriate Clinical Specimen Type
Real-time RT-PCR	Serum (EDTA or citrate plasma also acceptable) from HAV IgM-positive patients
Genotyping	HAV PCR-positive serum or plasma

Health care providers must obtain approval from their local public health department prior to shipment.

**Serum or Plasma**

- Collect 5 ml of blood in a red top or serum separator tube. EDTA and citrate blood tubes also are acceptable.
- Capillary blood (finger or heel stick) can be used for pediatric patients, if necessary; at least 3-5 capillary tubes are needed.
- Do not freeze the blood before serum or plasma has been removed. Separate blood cells from serum or plasma prior to shipment. Transfer serum/plasma to a sterile tube that has an externally threaded cap with an O-ring seal.
- The minimum volume for testing is 0.5 ml.

**Specimen storage and shipping**

- Store specimens at 4°C and ship on cold pack within 24 to 72 hours.
- Longer storage: store and ship at -70°C.

**Enhanced hepatitis A surveillance**

- Please submit HAV IgM-positive serum or plasma specimens for molecular confirmatory testing (PCR) and genotyping of HAV case-patients with compatible symptoms and who:
  - are experiencing homelessness;
  - have a history of drug abuse or are currently abusing drugs;
  - recently traveled to an endemic area;
  - are MSM; OR
  - have an epidemiologic linkage to any of the above risk groups.
- Specimens also may be submitted from patients who meet clinical case criteria but lack known HAV risk factors.

**Complete the VRDL General Purpose Specimen**

**Submittal Form** for each specimen ([VRDL Specimen Submittal Form](#)):

- Include hard copy of form with specimens, noting:
  - Date of jaundice onset (or symptom onset, if no jaundice)
  - Liver enzyme (ALT/AST) values
  - Travel history or other risk factors
  - CalREDIE ID# if available
  - HAV vaccination date, if known.
- **Notify CDPH by secure email to [VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov) and [vpdreport@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:vpdreport@cdph.ca.gov).** Include a PDF of the VRDL submittal form and the name and phone number of the investigator in your jurisdiction who can provide additional information.

**Ship approved specimens to:** CDPH VRDL

**Attn: Specimen Receiving**  
850 Marina Bay Parkway  
Richmond, CA 94804

**Other resources**

- [CDPH Hepatitis A disease webpage](#)
- [Hepatitis A "Quicksheet" for local health departments](#)

**Questions** about specimen collection, submittal, or shipping: Please contact the VRDL Medical and Epidemiology Liaison Section at (510) 307-8585 or [VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov).

**Report** suspected, probable, and confirmed cases via CalREDIE or the [Hepatitis A Case Report Form](#) or contact the CDPH Immunization Branch at (510) 620-3737 and ask to be referred to the epidemiologist on-call.

[Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory](#)

850 Marina Bay Parkway, Richmond, CA 94804

Tel (510) 307-8585; FAX (510) 307-8599