

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Joseph A. Ladapo, M.D., Ph.D.**  
State Surgeon General

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

## BUREAU OF PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

### Quick Reference Guide To HIV-1 RNA Viral Load Testing

The Department of Health, Bureau of Public Health Laboratories offers HIV-1 RNA viral load testing using the Hologic Aptima HIV-1 RNA Quant Dx assay. Below is a guide for this service.

- No preliminary restrictions such as fasting are required for a satisfactory plasma specimen.
- Collect 5mL of blood in a sterile Plasma Preparation Tube (PPT), "pearl top", BD reference #362788. The assay requires a minimum of 2.5 ml plasma. **Do not refrigerate whole blood.** Alternatively, one may collect 7mL of blood in EDTA (K3, 0.15% soln.), "purple top".
- Specimen must be labeled with **at least two unique patient identifiers** (first and last name, unique ID# or DOB) and the **date of collection**. Electronic lab order preferred, HMS, etc. **Information on the specimen must match the requisition.**
- Centrifuge (10-15 minutes at 1000 x g) the PPT or purple top **within 8 hours of collection**. PPT is now ready to freeze until shipment is prepared (decanting plasma is not required). Purple tops will require decanting of plasma from cells, into a **sterile screw-top plastic tube**.
- Immediately place PPT or plasma in -20°C freezer. Send plasma(s) on approx. 2-3 kg dry ice (if available), do not allow dry ice to contact specimens. However, if dry ice is not available, specimens may be sent on 3-4 frozen refrigerant packs in a Styrofoam cooler. Please **label the cooler on the outside with "Viral Load or VLoad"**. Do not allow specimens to thaw before shipping. PPT and plasma specimens are acceptable upon receipt at laboratory if frozen or maintained at 2-8°C for <6 days.
- Follow appropriate packaging and transporting guidelines. Send these specimens as "UN 3373 Biological Substance Category B". Do not transport dry ice in an airtight container.
- Ship plasma(s) priority overnight to the public health laboratory **Monday thru Friday only**. If the work week includes a holiday, please call the laboratory for collection and shipping instructions.
- HIV-1 viral load test services may be electronically ordered through HMS, order #0560

Should you need additional information or clarification please contact Ms. Imelda Ignacio-Hernando at (904) 791-1531, or Mr. Berry Bennett at (904) 791-1527.

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