

PDL UPDATE: COVID-19 Variant Surveillance

July 26, 2021

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Santa Barbara County currently has a SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) variant surveillance program to monitor circulating variants in our community. In order to keep you up to date, Pacific Diagnostic Laboratories (PDL) is providing the following information on the program. The pandemic response continues to be very dynamic and we will provide updates as appropriate.

Is variant identification using Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) being performed on positive COVID-19 specimens?

Yes. Under direction from Public Health, PDL is submitting positive specimens to be sequenced to determine the variant. Specimens must meet the following criteria to be submitted:

- Specimen is submitted in Universal Transport Media (UTM) or Viral Transport Media (VTM) or saline
 - *Please note, eSwab is NOT an acceptable collection media for sequencing due to the limited volume*
- Specimen has a high enough viral load to qualify (PDL does this assessment by reviewing test performance data)
- Specimen volume is sufficient (swab submitted into 3 mL of UTM/VTM/saline)
- For any particular patient a specimen will only be submitted once per acute illness

Priority is given first to inpatient cases then to vaccine breakthrough cases and, if testing capacity allows, outreach community specimens.

Do I need to place an order for sequencing?

No. PDL is working with Public Health and will submit qualifying specimens.

What is a vaccine "breakthrough" case?

A vaccine "breakthrough case" is defined as an individual having a positive COVID-19 test result at least 14 days after the final dose of any COVID-19 vaccine series.

How should I indicate that a COVID-19 positive patient is a suspected vaccine "breakthrough"?

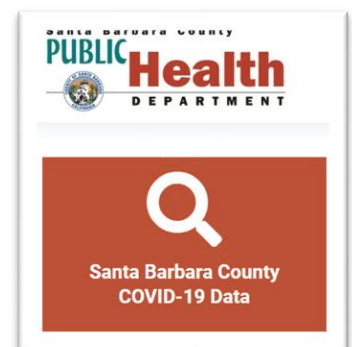
When submitting the COVID-19 test order for a suspected vaccine breakthrough case, please include the following information as a comment on the test order:

- That it is a suspected vaccine breakthrough case
- Vaccine date(s) for each dose
- Vaccine manufacturer

Will I receive the results of the sequencing on my positive COVID-19 patient?

No. The current variant surveillance program in Santa Barbara County is a collaboration between Santa Barbara County Public Health systems and UCSB. UCSB is performing the sequencing in collaboration with local and state Public Health oversight. UCSB is not a CLIA certified lab, which prevents PDL from providing a result in the patient medical record.

Local surveillance results are being published on the **Santa Barbara County Community Data Dashboard**. The Dashboard is available on the Santa Barbara Public Health COVID-19 website: <https://publichealthsb.org>



PLEASE NOTE: PDL does not have access to sequencing results.

Additional information on variants can be found on the following websites:

California Department of Public Health (CDPH):

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-Variants.aspx>

Center for Disease Control (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/variant-surveillance/variant-info.html>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT PDL CLIENT SERVICES AT 1 805 879 8100

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