



Protocol for the testing of SARS-CoV2 in persons arriving in Malta

Version 1.0
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This protocol delineates the criteria to be followed for persons arriving in Malta. According to LN 40 of 2020 – the Period of Quarantine Order, 2020 (and later updated through other LNs and through a notice in the Government Gazette) any person arriving in Malta must submit himself to a fourteen (14) day period of quarantine immediately upon his arrival in Malta. This is in view of the risk of importing COVID19 cases into Malta.

Worldwide, nasopharyngeal swab tests for SARS-CoV2 are being used to help identify persons with COVID19. A combination of Reverse Transcriptase and Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) is used to reverse transcribe viral RNA into DNA, amounts of which are amplified through PCR. Persons who, at the time of testing are shedding enough virus to be detected by the lab, will result in 'SARS-CoV2 Detected' (positive). It is important to note that a single swab test where 'SARS-CoV2 is Not Detected' does not imply that the person does not have COVID-19.

Despite Malta's borders being closed, numerous requests for repatriation are received, as well as the requirement for the entry of essential workers. Persons whose requests are accepted arrive both by air and by sea. Further to this, all persons arriving in Malta will now be requested to undergo the following schedule of testing. This requirement does not in any way affect or change the requirement by law, for persons arriving in Malta to observe 14 days of quarantine.

A. Approval to travel to Malta

Persons intending to travel to Malta who are not Maltese Nationals or do not have a residency permit to live in Malta are required to apply for approval of such travel by the Superintendent of Public Health by sending an email to covid19.vetting@gov.mt.

B. Proof that SARS-CoV2 is NOT DETECTED prior to arrival in Malta

Persons approved to travel to Malta will be required to provide confirmation that a swab test taken within the (7 days) 168 hours prior to arrival in Malta, did Not detect SARS-CoV2. Such a test can be done in any country during the 7 days prior to arrival in Malta, and must be done in any lab which is licensed or has accreditation. If the result is not in English, an official translation into English is required and must be provided by the time of checking in for a flight to Malta, or by the time of requesting entry into Malta by sea. Once tested, all persons are expected to keep any contacts to a minimum, wear protective mask/visor as appropriate, and maintain social distancing until arrival in Malta.

In the event that such a confirmation is not available, airplane boarding to Malta or sea-port entry will be denied.

In the case of persons who have been at sea for the 168 hours prior to arriving in Malta, such testing would be required to be done prior to these persons landing in Malta. No contact with others may occur before a test result confirming that SARS-CoV2 is not detected is available.

All arrivals must send a copy of their negative swab test result to quarantine.covid@gov.mt.

C. Testing for SARS-CoV2 on arrival in Malta

All persons arriving in Malta will be subject to further testing for SARS-CoV2. Persons arriving through Malta International Airport and the Sea Terminal will be subject to testing within 48 hours of arrival/landing in Malta. Persons arriving in Malta will be required to make an appointment for testing at one of the testing centres available – public or private.

At the ports of entry, Passenger Locator Forms or personal details including Name, Surname, valid Passport number and valid Telephone number and email address need to be provided.

Appointments at the public testing centres can be made by contacting 111 or 21324086, giving one's personal details. Details of the appointment and test results must be forwarded to quarantine.covid@gov.mt.

D. Re-testing for SARS-CoV2 while in quarantine

All persons who would have arrived in Malta and whose result of testing on arrival did not detect SARS-CoV2, will be required to get re-tested. Such testing needs to be done between 10-13 days from arrival. Such testing may be done in any public or private testing centre. An appointment at the public testing centres can be arranged by contacting 111 or +356 21324086.

Since all persons arriving in Malta are required to observe 14 days of quarantine, they are only allowed to leave the place where they are observing such quarantine to attend for a swabbing appointment or if they require urgent medical care. Details of swabbing appointments or of the requirement to attend for urgent medical care need to be forwarded to quarantine.covid@gov.mt.

All persons still need to observe the full 14 day period of quarantine, regardless of any SARS-CoV2 not detected swab result received.

Any person whose swab test detects SARS-CoV2 will be managed and followed up by Public Health Authorities in line with their protocols.