GENERAL INFORMATION

SARS-CoV-2 is a new betacoronavirus that had been unknown until the outbreak of respiratory diseases—including atypical pneumonia—that started in late December 2019 in Wuhan, China.

The newly identified coronavirus is similar to some types of coronavirus previously found in bats, but it is different from SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV.

The genome of the newly discovered CoV consists of a positive-sense single-stranded RNA of approximately 30k nucleotides. Its genome organization is similar to that of other coronaviruses. It has been recently sequenced and contains the open reading frames (ORFs) common to all betacoronaviruses:

- The ORF1ab gene, which encodes most of the enzymatic proteins
- The spike glycoprotein gene (S)
- The small envelope protein gene (E)
- The matrix protein gene (M)
- The nucleocapsid protein gene (N)
- The gene that encodes non-structural proteins

Among the main priorities to ensure public health is the choice of the diagnostic *gold standard technique*. Detection by reverse transcription real-time PCR (rRT-PCR) has been proven before by public health laboratories during public health emergencies.

INTENDED USE

In accordance with technical guidelines developed by the World Health Organization for the detection of SARS-CoV-2, the **Imegen SARS-CoV-2** Plus kit detects 3 specific targets in genes common to all betacoronaviruses:

- **The ORF1ab gene**, which encodes most of the enzymatic proteins
- **The S gene**, which encodes the spike glycoprotein
- **The E gene**, which encodes the small envelope protein

This test enables reverse transcription of viral RNA and real-time detection via PCR of the target genes through a one-step rRT-PCR, using a combination of multiplexed oligonucleotides and fluorescent hydrolysis probes (FAM, VIC, Cy5 and TexasRed).

The kit includes 2 controls to evaluate the preanalytical processes, the RNA sample extraction and the viral RNA amplification protocol:

- **Control of the preanalytical process**: The Kit includes an endogenous positive control for the GUS-B gene that encodes the human beta-glucuronidase. This control amplifies only RNA, allowing the user to evaluate the sample obtention process, including the transport and storage conditions, up to the extraction of nucleic acids in the laboratory.
- **Control of the RT-PCR process:** The Kit includes a positive control that allows the user to evaluate that the preparation of the RT-PCR assay and to ensure the correct set-up of the PCR programme.

Attention! An endogenous RNA control requires optimal sample handling and processing conditions to avoid degradation processes.

The results obtained from this test can be used to confirm the patient's diagnosis. This test is not optimal for the study of the SARS and MERS coronaviruses.

> The **Imegen SARS-CoV-2** Plus kit can be used for *in vitro* diagnosis, and it is aimed at professionals in the virology and molecular biology sectors

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The **Imegen SARS Cov-2** Plus kit enables the detection of SARS-CoV-2 in previously purified RNA samples.

- **Sample type:** RNA extracted from nasopharyngeal cotton swabs, bronchoalveolar lavage, sputum, or any other respiratory sample.
- **Sample quantity:** 6 µL RNA
- **Inclusivity:** 100% for genomes reported in GISAID (31.07.2020)
- **Specificity (Cross-reactivity):** 100% (Human SARS and MERS cases will test negative)
- **Test time** (rRT-PCR): 1h 20 min
- Four specific targets detected in 1 amplification mix:

Fluorophores	Mix 1
FAM	ORF1ab
VIC	S
Cy5	E
TexasRed	GUS-B

SAMPLE PREPARATION

Below we highlight some of the most important requisites for the collection, preparation, and submission of the sample. For more information, review the procedure for action against cases of infection by the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus by the Spanish Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud) and Instituto de Salud Carlos III.

1. Sample type: Sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage of the lower respiratory tract, or nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal cotton swabs taken simultaneously from the upper respiratory tract.

2. Sample collection: The sample collector must use an N96 or equivalent respirator and gloves. It is recommended to indicate sample type and the time the sample was taken.

3. Preparation for sample transport: Always use triple packaging, checking the tightness of each layer to prevent leakage during transport. Temperatures during transport must be maintained below 4ºC.

4. Sample storage prior to transport: If it is not possible to send the sample to the analysis laboratory within 72h of its collection, we recommend that the sample be stored at -80ºC and transported on dry ice whenever possible.

5. Extraction of viral RNA: Use an adequate viral RNA extraction method, be it manual or automated. It is recommended to thoroughly clean the surfaces and work equipment in order to eliminate nucleases (Rnase) before initiating the extraction protocol. Depending on the extraction method, the yield and pureness of the extracted RNA may differ. As an automated extraction method, the MagNA Pure Compact System with the corresponding MagNA Pure Compact Nucleic Acid Isolation Kit (Roche) has been used successfully.

CONTENT AND STORAGE CONDITIONS OF THE KIT

The kit contains the necessary reagents to carry out 96 RT-qPCR reactions with each specific Master Mix:

- **SARS-CoV-2 Plus Master Mix:** It contains the oligonucleotides and hydrolysis probes to carry out the amplification of the virus-specific ORF1ab system (FAM), gene S (VIC), gene E (Cy5) and the human endogenous control GUS-B (TexasRed).
- **RT-PCR Master Mix:** PCR Master Mix with the nucleotides, $MgCl_2$, real-time PCR enzyme, and buffer necessary to carry out the real-time PCR.
- **RTase:** Reverse transcriptase enzyme to carry out RNA reverse transcription to complementary DNA (cDNA).
- **Positive control:** Positive control with the target sequences for the amplification of the S gene, the E gene, the ORF1ab gene, and the GUS-B gene.

Reagents	Color	Quantity	Conservation
SARS-CoV-2 Plus Master Mix	Red cap	915 µL	-20º
RT-PCR Master Mix	White cap	385 µL	
RTase	Yellow cap	48 µL	
Positive control	Green cap	60 µL	

Table 1. Components of the Imegen-SARS-CoV-2 Plus Kit

imegen
+34 963 212 340 | info@imegen.es | imegen.es
Instituto de Medicina Genómica SL
Agustín Escardino 9. 46980 Paterna (Valencia, Spain)

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NECESSARY EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS NOT INCLUDED IN THE KIT

Equipment:

- Real-time PCR thermal cycler able to detect FAM, VIC, Cy5 and TexasRed fluorophores
- 10 µL, 20 µL, and 200 µL micropipettes
- Vortex mixer
- Centrifuge

Reagents:

- Viral RNA/total RNA extraction kit
- Nuclease-free water

Materials:

- Optical 96-well plates or 0.2 ml optical tubes
- Optical consumables compatible with the real-time PCR thermal cycler
- Filter pipette tips (10 µL, 20 µL, and 200 µL)
- Sterile 1.5 ml tubes
- Latex gloves
- Surface decontaminant products such as "RNAse away"
- Material necessary for nucleic acid extraction

ASSAY PROTOCOL

Preparation for amplification reactions:

1. Thaw all kit reagents and RNA samples at room temperature and keep on ice once thawed.

2. Shake each reagent on a vortex mixer and keep cold.

3. Prepare the PCR mix as specified below using a 1.5 ml tube:

Reagents	Quantity per sample or control
SARS-CoV-2 Plus Master Mix	9.5 µL
RTase	0.5 µL
RT-PCR Master Mix	4 µL

NOTE: To estimate the necessary amount of reagents according to the number of samples and controls that will be simultaneously analyzed in each run, we recommend either including one extra reaction in the calculations or increasing the volume of each reagent by 10%.

4. Mix the reagents by pipetting several times, spin the PCR mixes, and dispense 14 µL into each well of the optical plate.

5. Once PCR mixes have been dispensed, add the following to the corresponding wells:

- 6 µL RNA samples
- 6 µL positive control
- 6 µL of nuclease-free water (negative control for PCR)

NOTE: It is recommended to add one negative PCR control per master mix to rule out reagent contamination, as well as one positive control per master mix to ensure the correct functioning of the PCR reaction.

6. Place the tubes or plates into the real-time PCR thermal cycler and configure settings for the amplification program as indicated in the next section.

Settings for the real-time PCR program

- Fluorophores of hydrolysis probes:

Probe	Emitter	Genotyping	Quencher
ORF1ab	FAM	Gene ORF1ab	MGB
E	Cy5	Gene E	BHQ2 (None)
S	VIC	Gene S	MGB
GUS-B	TexasRed	Gene GUS-B (Human)	BHQ2 (None)

Table 2. Information about hydrolysis probes

- RT-PCR program:
  - QuantStudio 5 Real-time PCR System:
    - Type of experiment: Quantitation-Comparative Ct
    - Ramping speed: standard
    - ROX™ baseline reference: NONE

  Configure PCR settings as per the optimum program (1) indicated below:

Stage	No. of cycles	Temperature	Time
Reverse transcription	1	48ºC	15 minutes
Enzymatic activation	1	95ºC	10 minutes
PCR Denaturation, annealing, and extension	40	95ºC 58ºC 68ºC	5 seconds 15 seconds 15 seconds(1)

Table 3. Optimum PCR program for the QuantStudio 5 Real-time PCR Systems

  - 7500 FAST Real-time PCR System:
    - Type of experiment: Quantitation-Comparative Ct
    - Ramping speed: standard
    - Dye as passive reference: NONE

  Configure PCR settings as per the optimum program (1) indicated below:

Stage	No. of cycles	Temperature	Time
Reverse transcription	1	48ºC	15 minutes
Enzymatic activation	1	95ºC	10 minutes
PCR Denaturation, annealing, and extension	40	95ºC 58ºC 68ºC	5 seconds 15 seconds 30 seconds(1)

Table 4. Optimum PCR program for 7500 FAST Real-time PCR System

(1) Fluorescence acquisition

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The following recommendations should be followed to ensure an accurate analysis of results:

- Make sure that no amplification occurred in negative PCR controls, either in the fluorescence channels (FAM, VIC, Cy5, TexasRed). If amplification is detected in a negative control, it is recommended to repeat the assay to rule out accidental contamination.
- Make sure that amplification occurred in positive controls for all targets.
- Make sure that amplification of the endogenous human GUS-B gene occurred in all analyzed samples. A lack of amplification may indicate low RNA quality in the sample and will therefore invalidate any resulting conclusions.
- The specific software for the real-time PCR thermal cycler employed must be used to analyze samples. It is recommended to use the **Auto Baseline** and the **Auto Threshold** in the analysis setting. Analytical parameters are based on positive and negative controls. If an abnormal signal is observed, the value can be adjusted manually consulting the manufacturer's manual for real-time PCR system.

imegen
+34 963 212 340 | info@imegen.es | imegen.es
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Interpretation of the results

Below are the possible results obtained using the **Imegen SARS-CoV-2** Plus kit.

1. Verify the Ct values obtained for each sample.

Target E, S, ORF1ab	SARS-CoV-2 Results
Ct < 38	Positive (+)
38 ≤ Ct < 40	Inconclusive
Ct = Undetermined	Negative (-)

Table 5. Classification of results according to Ct values

2. Interpret the results of each sample by following the following recommendations:

ORF1ab	S	E	GUS-B	Status	Result	Action
-	-	-	Ct < 37	Valid	SARS-CoV-2 Negative	If the patient has symptoms, consider testing other respiratory virus
Two or more SARS-CoV-2 positive targets			Any Ct value	Valid	SARS-CoV-2 Positive	Report the results to the healthcare provider
-	-	+	Any Ct value	Valid	Betacorona-virus Positive	Report the results to the healthcare provider. Consider testing other respiratory virus
Only one SARS-CoV-2 positive target			Any Ct value	Valid	SARS-CoV-2 Inconclusive	Repeat the test. If the repeated test remains inconclusive, additional confirmation testing should be conducted if clinically indicated
Inconclusive SARS-CoV-2 targets in the absence of positive targets			Any Ct value	Valid		
-	-	-	Ct ≥ 37	Invalid	NA	The absence of GUS-B could suggest that the quantity or quality of the RNA sample is compromised. Repeat the test. If the repeated test remains inconclusive, additional confirmation testing should be conducted if clinically indicated

Table 6. Interpretation of results of SARS-CoV-2 Plus

Below are some examples of how some results obtained using the Imegen SARS-CoV-2 Plus kit are displayed.

Positive Control:

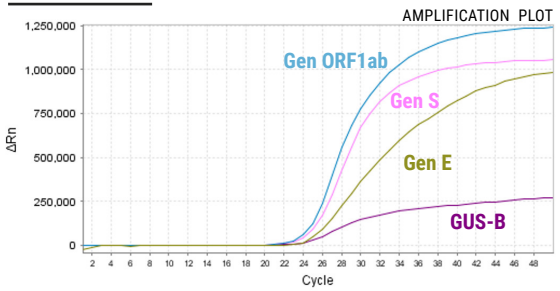

Figure 6. Result obtained from the positive control with SARS-CoV-2 Plus. Amplification of the virus-specific ORF1ab gene (FAM) is shown in blue, the S gen (VIC) shown win pink, the E gene (Cy5) shown in green and the internal positive control GUS-B (TexasRed) is shown in purple

Example of COVID-19-negative sample:

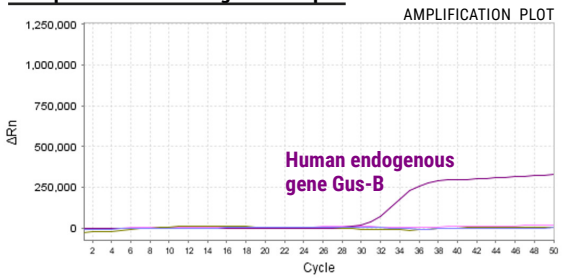

Figure 7. Result obtained from a negative SARS-CoV-2 sample. Amplification of the human endogenous Gus-B gene (TexasRed) is shown in purple

Example of COVID-19-positive sample:

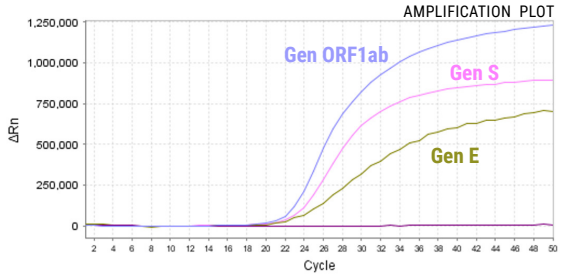

Figure 8. Result obtained from a positive sample. Amplification of the specific gene ORF1ab (FAM) is shown in blue, the S gene in pink (VIC), and the E gene (Cy5) in green. The human endogenous gene is not detected when a high viral load is present in the sample

TROUBLESHOOTING

The following table shows results that may be obtained while using positive controls, negative controls, and viral RNA samples. If an unexpected result is obtained, the interpretation of the result and the most likely reason for the result are given in the following table:

Control	RNase P	S, N, ORF1ab targets	Result / Interpretation
Positive control	+	+	Expected result
	-	-	PCR failure [1]
RNA sample	+	+	Expected result
	+	-	
	-	-	RNA samples failed to amplify [2]
Negative control (NTC)	-	-	Expected result
	+	+	Contamination from positive samples or positive control material [3]

Table 7. Interpretation of possible results from Imegen-SARS-CoV-2

(1) **PCR failure:** An amplification error may occur due to a technical issue during PCR configuration.

Recommendation: Make sure the amplification program and fluorescence detection configuration are correct.

(2) **Viral RNA sample amplification failure:** IA failure to amplify the endogenous control (GUS-B) in the RNA sample could suggest that the quantity or quality of the RNA sample is compromised. The RNA molecule is susceptible to degradation under suboptimal processing conditions (eg. lack of refrigeration, use of unsuitable transport medium, exposure to high temperatures).

Recommendation: Evaluate your preanalytical process and perform a second extraction and analysis before proceeding with the interpretation of the results.

(3) **Contamination from positive samples or positive control material:** PCR contamination could be caused by improper sample handling, the use of contaminated reagents, or environmental contamination, both from positive samples and positive control material.

Recommendation: Deep cleaning of the laboratory where PCRs are prepared, including equipment and material used. If necessary, use new aliquots from PCR reagents and finally prepare the PCR reactions containing the positive controls to avoid any cross-contamination.

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