

Butte County Public Health Laboratory

COLLECTION AND SHIPMENT OF NON-AVIAN INFLUENZA SPECIMENS

3-19-2008

CRITERIA FOR COLLECTION

Patients with influenza-like illnesses (temperature $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 37.8°C (oral) having a cough and/or sore throat, especially those:

- With severe symptoms OR
- With recent overseas travel OR
- Whom have received this year's influenza vaccine

TIMING THE COLLECTION OF THE SPECIMEN

Collect respiratory specimens within 3 days of onset of symptoms. If possible, collect serial specimens from the patient over several days.

For serologic testing: the acute sample should be collected within the first week of illness and a second sample should be collected 2-4 weeks later.

COLLECTION

- **Please use sterile Dacron swabs with plastic or metal shafts.** Collect one nasal swab and one throat swab from each patient and place into a single tube of viral transport medium (VTM). Break off shafts of swabs at a short enough length to allow the tightening of the VTM screw cap. **Screw caps on tightly**. After inoculation, the tube **MUST BE REFRIGERATED at 4°C**
- Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate: Collect 1-2 ml into sterile vial (preferred for children < 2 yrs of age)
- Label the tube with the following: **patient's name, physician's name, date collected, and type of specimen** (under "Comments").
- Complete a [Viral and Rickettsial Disease Specimen Submittal Form for Influenza or other Respiratory Illnesses](#) for each tube.

SHIPPING OF SPECIMEN

- Place the inoculated VTM tube into a plastic specimen biohazard bag containing an absorbent pad. Place this bag into a Styrofoam icebox or other suitable container with two frozen “Kool” packs.
- Multiple specimens can be shipped in the same box.
- Specimens can be shipped Monday through Wednesday if delivered to the Laboratory no later than 3:30 PM. On Thursdays the lab must receive specimens no later than noon that day.
- Specimens will not be shipped on Fridays, holidays or weekends.
- Specimens can be stored at 4° C for up to 4 days.
- Specimens stored longer than 4 days at 4° C will be rejected.
- Specimens that will take longer than 4 days to ship will be rejected.
- **Freezing at -20° C is not recommended. It may decrease viability of the specimen. If specimens must be frozen, then store at -70° C. Transportation and shipment will then require the use dry ice. Multiple freeze and thaw cycles can be damaging to the virus.**

Note: VTM should be stored at room temperature PRIOR to inoculation. Freeze cool packs in -20° C until ready to use.

SPECIMEN TYPES

Seasonal Influenza:

- Nasopharyngeal swab (1st choice): Use Dacron swab with an aluminum or plastic shaft. Place NP swab into a sterile screw-capped tube of viral transport media (VTM). Volume of VTM should be ~ 2 mls.
- Oropharyngeal swab (2nd choice): Use Dacron swab with an aluminum or plastic shaft. Place oropharyngeal swab into a sterile screw-capped tube of viral transport media (VTM). Volume of VTM should be ~ 2 mls.
- Nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate: Collect 1-2 ml into sterile vial (preferred for children < 2 yrs of age)

Please contact the Laboratory if you have any questions concerning submission of specimens @ 530.891.2747