



State Health Laboratories

50 Orms Street
Providence, RI 02904-2222

401.222.5600
401.222.6985 Fax
TTY: 711

www.health.ri.gov

Specimen Collection Instructions for H1N1 Influenza Testing

HEALTH Laboratory will only test specimens from patients who meet the current HEALTH criteria for having this test performed at the HEALTH Laboratory. The current surveillance populations being tested at the HEALTH Laboratory can be found at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/surveillance/>

1. Follow currently recommended guidance for wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when collecting the specimen(s). Guidance can be found at: <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/H1N1Advisories/SurgicalMasksN95Respirators.pdf>
2. Only the following specimens are being accepted by the HEALTH Laboratory for H1N1 testing:
 - Swab of nasopharynx in viral transport media (VTM)
 - Swab of throat in VTM
 - Swabs of both nasopharynx and throat in VTM
 - Endotracheal aspirate (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
 - Endotracheal wash (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
 - Bronchoalveolar lavage (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
 - Bronchial aspirate (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
 - Bronchial wash (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
 - Tracheal aspirate (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
 - Nasal aspirate (submit in VTM, dilute specimen 1:2 with VTM)
3. **The recommended specimen for testing is a swab of the nasopharynx.** The nasopharyngeal specimen is to be collected with a flexible wire or plastic shaft nasopharyngeal (NP) swab with a polyester, Dacron or rayon tip (calcium alginate or cotton tipped swabs are unacceptable).
4. Collect the nasopharyngeal specimen by passing the NP swab through the nares until resistance is met by virtue of contact with the nasopharynx. Although a contact time of 30 seconds is advocated, in practice, a few seconds of contact often induces coughing or patient resistance, either of which is adequate incentive to remove the swab. See diagram on following page.
5. Inoculate the tube of Viral Transport Media (VTM) by inserting the swab into the tube; making certain that the liquid in the tube covers the swab tip. The swab shaft should be clipped at the top or bent so that the cap of the VTM can be **tightened securely**.
6. Throat specimens are taken by swabbing the throat with a plastic shaft swab with polyester, Dacron or rayon tip (cotton or calcium alginate tipped or wooden shaft swabs are unacceptable). If a throat swab is taken in addition to a NP swab, it should be put into the same tube of VTM as the NP swab.
7. Make certain that the VTM tube is labeled with patient name and date of specimen collection. A completed HEALTH Laboratory test requisition form is to accompany the specimen to the HEALTH Laboratory. Peel off one of the adhesive stickers from the requisition form and attach it to the specimen.
8. **IMPORTANT:** Specimens must be placed into a specimen biohazard bag and transported to the State HEALTH Laboratory on either an ice pack or wet ice. Specimens must be refrigerated at 2-8°C until packaged for transport. If a specimen must be stored for longer than 4 days it must be held at -70°C and transported on dry ice.

Physicians participating in HEALTH'S outpatient ILI surveillance program should phone 222-5538 to arrange for the transport of specimens to the HEALTH Laboratory.

Hospital Laboratories should use their routine courier to transport specimens to the HEALTH Laboratory. Phone the Molecular Diagnostics lab at 222-5538 for questions related to this protocol.

DIAGRAM OF NASOPHARYNGEAL SPECIMEN COLLECTION

