

Vermont Department of Health Laboratory

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Instructions for Reporting, Collecting and Shipping Specimens for Seasonal and Non-Avian (H5) Influenza Viruses VDHL Kit 9

This document contains detailed information on reporting, collecting, shipping, and testing of clinical specimens.

The kit should contain:

- Insulated shipping container (optional)
- Container(s) of refrigerant (e.g., Gel-Pak) (optional)
- Labeled screw-cap tube of viral transport medium
- (1) Micro-Tipped flocked nasopharyngeal swab
- (1) Traditional-Tipped flocked nasal swab
- Metal inner container
- VDHL Clinical Test Request form (Micro 220)

For guidance on the use of Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Tests for patients with Influenza-like Illness, refer to CDC's website www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/rapidclin.htm. **Diagnostic laboratory work on clinical specimens from patients with suspect influenza infection should be conducted with splash protection (the use of the following PPE is required: lab coat, gloves, eye protection, facemask). If aerosols will be generated (e.g., vortexing), then a Class II Biological Safety Cabinet must be used.**

A. Reporting

To report hospitalized patients or specimens being submitted from an institutional setting, health care providers should notify the VDH Epidemiology Division at 802-863-7240 or 1-800-640-4374 (VT only). Epidemiologists are available at these numbers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

B. Collection of Respiratory Specimens

1. **A surgical or procedure mask should be worn when collecting specimens for Influenza testing.** Specimens should be collected within the first 3 days of illness onset.

2. Print patient name and date of collection on labeled plastic tube containing the viral transport medium.

3. **Preferred Specimens:**

***Nasopharyngeal swab or Nasal swab.**

- **Nasopharyngeal swab:** using sterile technique, insert the dry nasopharyngeal swab into one nostril to the posterior pharyngeal area, hold the swab in place for 3-5 seconds to absorb secretions, rotate gently and then withdraw the swab.
- **Nasal swab:** using sterile technique, insert a dry swab approximately 2 cm into the naris. Rotate the swab against the anterior nasal mucosa for 3 seconds. Using the same swab, repeat for the other naris.

*Swab specimens should be collected using swabs with a Dacron[®] tip and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Swabs with calcium alginate or cotton tips and wooden shafts are unacceptable.

4. Place the swab(s) into the tube of viral transport medium. Break off the top portion of the swabs at the score line such that the cap can be placed on.

5. Screw cap on the viral transport tube tightly.

6. Place labeled viral transport tube containing the swab into the metal container provided. Screw cap on tightly.

7. Fill out the requisition form (Micro 220) completely. **All information is required to ensure accurate and efficient processing of the specimen and reporting of test results.**

Name and address of health care provider

Patient's name and date of birth

Patient's gender

Hospitalized (check this box under Reason For Test if patient is hospitalized)

Date of specimen collection

Date vaccinated for Influenza

Travel history (**testing may be delayed if not filled in**)

Source of specimen (nasopharyngeal, etc.)

Test requested (Influenza A and B PCR)

8. Place the completed requisition form in the outside pocket of the biohazard bag. Place the metal container containing the specimen into the Ziploc portion of the biohazard bag. Place the biohazard bag containing the specimen and form into the large Ziploc bag.
9. **Refrigerate specimen immediately. Do not freeze.**

C. Shipment

Please use your regular courier for transport of the specimen(s) to the VDH Laboratory. Specimens must be shipped cold, in an insulated container, to arrive at the laboratory within 2 days of collection.

Protocols for standard interstate shipment of etiologic agents should be followed. These standards are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/biosfty/shipregs.htm> . All shipments must comply with current DOT/IATA shipping regulations.

If you have any comments or questions regarding these instructions, please call one of the telephone numbers listed on the front of this form.