City and County of San Francisco
Public Health Laboratory

West Nile Virus Laboratory Testing Guidelines

The San Francisco Public Health Laboratory must be notified prior to submission of specimens.
Tel: 415-554-2800/ Fax: 415-431-0651

WNV testing is recommended on individuals with the following:

A. **Encephalitis**

B. **Aseptic Meningitis (Note: Consider enterovirus for individuals ≤ 18 years of age)**

C. **Acute Flaccid Paralysis; atypical Guillain-Barré Syndrome; transverse myelitis or**

D. **Febrile illness compatible with West Nile fever* and lasting ≥ 7 days (must be seen by a health care provider)**

**The West Nile fever syndrome can be variable and often includes headache and fever (T≥38C). Other symptoms include rash, swollen lymph nodes, eye pain, nausea or vomiting. After initial symptoms, the patient may experience several days of fatigue and lethargy.*

Instructions for Sending Specimens

Prior to sending specimens a completed West Nile Case History must be faxed to the Communicable Disease Control Unit (CDCU) at 554-2848 and approval for testing obtained from the CDCU at 554-2830.

1. **Required specimens:**
   - **Acute Serum** (Serum is the best specimen): ≥ 2cc serum or a full (8.0 cc) red top tube collected ≤ 7 days after onset.
   - **Cerebral Spinal Fluid**: 1-2cc CSF may be submitted with acute serum for further testing at the CDC if lumbar puncture is performed and residual CSF is available. (Please note: these results may not be available for several weeks)

2. **If West Nile virus is highly suspected and acute serum is negative or inconclusive:**
   - A **2nd serum**: ≥ 2 cc serum (or a full (8.0 cc) red top tube) collected 3-5 days after acute serum.

- Each specimen should be labeled with **date of collection**, **specimen type**, and **patient name**
- Refrigerated specimens should be sent on **cold pack** using an overnight courier
- Frozen specimens should be sent on **dry ice** using an overnight courier
- CSF that cannot be shipped within 24 hours of collection should be stored frozen at -70°C
- Serum that cannot be shipped within 24 hours of collection may be stored at 4°C (2-8°C for up to five days) or at -70°C
- Please do not send the specimens on Fridays (Specimen Receiving Hours: M-Th 9-4)

❖ For hospital-based patients, send specimens to the hospital clinical laboratory.
❖ For non-hospital-based patients, send specimens with a completed San Francisco Laboratory Form (http://www.sfcdcp.org/diseasereporting.html) to:

San Francisco Public Health Laboratory
101 Grove Street, Room 419
San Francisco, CA 94102
Phone: (415) 554-2800 Fax: (415) 431-0651