

SFDPH Influenza Lab Specimen Instructions

(11/6/2019)

SPECIMEN TYPES

Preferred specimen types:

- Nasopharyngeal or nasal swab (Preferred): Use Dacron swab with an aluminum or plastic shaft. Place NP swab in sterile vial containing 2 ml of liquid viral transport media (VTM) or universal transport media (UTM).
 - Nasal wash or aspirate (Preferred): Place 1-2 ml of specimen into a sterile cup.
 - Nasopharyngeal wash or aspirate: Place 1-2 ml of specimen into a sterile cup.
 - Oropharyngeal (throat) swab AND a nasal swab (total of 2 swabs): (Acceptable, if unable to obtain one of the above specimens): Use Dacron swabs with an aluminum or plastic shaft. Place swabs in sterile vials of 2ml VTM or UTM.
 - If the patient is hospitalized with pneumonia, specimens from lower respiratory tract should be collected (tracheal aspirates, bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, or lung tissue). Collect 1-2 ml into sterile vial.
- * **Swabs made of calcium alginate or with wooden shafts are NOT acceptable.**

Other acceptable specimen types:

- Oropharyngeal (throat) swabs. Lower respiratory tract specimens (bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, tracheal aspirate, and lung tissue).

SPECIMEN COLLECTION AND HANDLING:

- Specimens should be collected within the first 24-72 hours of onset of symptoms, and no later than 5 days from onset of symptoms.
- Specimens should be stored at 2-8°C immediately after collection. Specimen may be stored at 2-8°C for up to 72 hours. If samples are to be stored for longer than 72 hours prior to transport to the PH lab, then the specimens must be frozen at -70°C.
- For specimens delivered to the PH lab within 72 hours, please transport the specimen using cold packs. For specimens transported to the lab that are frozen, it is preferable to transport using dry ice.
- Avoid multiple freeze-thaw cycles and do not store specimen in self-defrosting freezer.

NOTIFICATION, LABELING AND DOCUMENTATION

Notification:

- Required for **fatal suspected or confirmed influenza patients between the ages 0-17 years.**
- Required for **Influenza due to novel strains.**

For these cases, please consult with the Communicable Disease Control Unit at (415) 554-2830 AND the San Francisco Public Health Laboratory at (415) 554-2800.

Accompanying documentation:

The package should include a completed SFDPH specimen submission form (available at <http://www.sfcdep.org/influenzareporting.html>). *Please include patient's risk factor, symptoms and other pertinent information (e.g. rapid flu test result) in the "Comment" section of that Form, including Submitter's phone number.* Include case history form if necessary.

SHIPPING

- Follow proper Packaging and Shipping Guidelines: label specimen with appropriate patient information and place in leak-proof specimen container with biohazard symbol; place specimen container in secondary container with absorbent and cushioning material; place secondary container along with requisition in outer cardboard container.
- Use a trained/contract carrier and label outer container to meet the requirements of the carrier being used.

Do not send by taxi.

**Send Specimens to:
San Francisco Public Health Laboratory
101 Grove Street – Room 412
San Francisco, CA 94102
Phone: (415) 554-2800
Fax: (415) 431-0651**