

ILI Outbreak Management

COLLECTION OF NASOPHARYNGEAL SWABS

How to collect a nasopharyngeal swab for influenza testing:

- Collect specimens from patient presenting with Influenza like illness within 72 hours of the onset of symptoms.
- Before performing any nasopharyngeal swab, ensure there are no contraindications (e.g. facial surgery or trauma).
- Specimen results directly impact outbreak management strategies for outbreaks of ILI.
- Please ensure that you include the facility and relevant outbreak unit on the requisition; This will ensure the test is done promptly and correctly reported.
- Continue collecting specimens from newly symptomatic patients/residents/clients until the laboratory confirms the organism or you are instructed to stop.
- Routine diagnostic swabs in transport media are NOT acceptable.
- Calcium alginate swabs used for Bordetella pertussis are NOT acceptable. Residues present in the swabs may inhibit PCR assays.


SUPPLIES

An 'Influenza Outbreak kit' from the Laboratory contains:

- Six flocked viral swabs with Viral transport media (COPAN Red Top)
- Inpatient Microbiology requisitions
- Instructions for sample collection

ILI Outbreak Management (continued)

PROCEDURE FOR NASOPHARYNGEAL SWABS

Procedure	
1	Explain procedure to the patient.
2	Protect yourself (fluid resistant mask with visor, gloves and disposable gown).
3	<p>If the patient has a lot of mucous, ask them to use a tissue to gently blow their nose prior to specimen collection.</p> <p>Influenza is found in the cells that line the nasopharynx, not in the mucous.</p>
4	<p>With head supported, push the tip of the nose upwards. Insert the swab backwards and downwards to a depth of 2-4 cm into one nostril. Rotate the swab gently for 5-10seconds.</p> 
5	Place the swab into the virus transport media, snap off the top of swab, tighten lid.
6	Label container with sample type and a minimum of two patient identifiers: First/Last Name, DOB, PHN, or use patient label with bar graph demographics
7	Instruct the patient to use a tissue to contain cough and mucous.

References:

- BCCDC H1N1 Specimen Collection Guidelines.
- Vancouver Coastal Health, Influenza-like Illness Outbreak – Specimen Collection.

ILI Outbreak Management (continued)

TRANSPORT OF NASOPHARYNGEAL SWABS

- The lab delivers two influenza outbreak kits to each amalgamate Island Health site at the onset of the official influenza season.
- For requests from Affiliated or Private sites and for additional kits, Island Health Microbiology Laboratory will send an outbreak kit with Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs on request.
- Transport can be arranged via courier, lab outreach staff, facility staff, or taxi. Hub labs include CRGH, CVH, NRGH, RJH, and VGH.
- Facilities are responsible for delivery of collected swabs to the lab.
- Usual courier delivery or routine lab collector visit is preferred to save costs. Urgent delivery creates an added cost for the facility.
- Affiliated and private facilities will pay for both delivery and return of outbreak kits if they do not have regular couriers to their sites.
- Island Health Microbiology Lab runs influenza tests daily at 11AM. Specimens received after that time will be processed the next day.
- The lab will provide instruction about the process on request.



- Specimens should be transported to the laboratory as soon as possible, following established methods for transporting STAT lab specimens (i.e. with a cold pack).
- Do not store unused or inoculated kits in the car.