



Influenza Testing

Revised 10/2011

The SRHD Laboratory will be performing typing and subtyping using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's:

- Human Influenza Virus Real-Time RT-PCR Detection and Characterization Panel
- Influenza 2009 A (H1N1)pdm Real-Time RT-PCR Panel (IVD)

Both panels are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and are the same procedures currently performed at the Washington State Department of Health Laboratories. Results will be primarily used for surveillance purposes and to help monitor influenza activity in the state. Identification of influenza infection can improve clinical care and infection control in hospitalized patients.

Currently, there is no charge for this influenza testing. The specimens will be batched and the tests performed at least weekly, or more frequently, depending on specimen volume. Appropriate antiviral treatment and infection control measures should not be delayed pending testing results. Antiviral treatment is most effective when administered as early as possible in the course of illness. Antiviral resistance tests are performed at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories.

Criteria for testing at SRHD Laboratory

- Hospitalized patients with suspected influenza, or who have tested positive for influenza A
- Outbreak of influenza in long-term care facilities
- Non-hospitalized patients with prior approval from SRHD Epidemiology

Specimens for testing from deceased patients must be sent to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories for viral culture.

Acceptable Specimens

- Nasopharyngeal swabs
- Nasal swabs
- Throat swabs
- Nasal aspirates
- Nasal washes
- Dual nasopharyngeal/throat swabs
- Bronchoalveolar lavage
- Bronchial wash
- Tracheal aspirate

Specimen Collection, Handling and Storage

Inadequate or inappropriate specimen collection, storage and transport are likely to yield false negative test results. Collect specimens using appropriate infection control procedures. Ideally, specimens should be collected within the first three (3) days after onset of clinical symptoms.

Collection

- Follow specimen collection devices' manufacturer instructions for proper collection methods.
- Swab specimens should be collected using swabs with a synthetic tip (e.g. polyester or Dacron®) and an aluminum or plastic shaft.
- Calcium alginate and cotton swabs with wooden shafts are not acceptable.
- Label the tube with patient name and date of birth.
- Complete the SRHD Request for Influenza Testing form.

Handling and Storage

- Specimens should be placed into sterile viral transport media (VTM) and immediately placed on ice or cold packs or at 2-8°C (refrigerator) for transport to the laboratory.
- Specimens must be received in the laboratory within 72 hours of collection.
- Specimens will be accepted Monday-Friday from 7:30am-3:30pm.

For questions regarding laboratory testing please contact the SRHD Laboratory at 509-324-1440.

For questions regarding testing parameters please contact SRHD Epidemiology at 509-324-1442.