

TDH: Interim influenza specimen collection and shipping instructions

# Collecting influenza specimens from the upper respiratory tract:

## Testing for Novel H1N1 (Swine-flu) Virus

Please refer to the algorithm for clinicians and clinical guidance documents available at <http://health.state.tn.us/H1N1.htm> for information as to who should be tested.

## Preferred Respiratory Specimens:

The following should be collected as soon as possible after illness onset: nasopharyngeal swab/aspirate or nasal wash/aspirate. If it is not possible to collect these types of specimens, a combined nasal swab with an oropharyngeal swab is acceptable. The nasal swab is better than the oropharyngeal swab. For patients who are intubated, an endotracheal aspirate should also be collected. Specimens should be placed into sterile viral transport media (VTM) and immediately placed on ice or cold packs or at 4°C (refrigerator) for transport to the laboratory. Recommended infection control guidance is available for persons collecting clinical specimens and for laboratory personnel and is posted on <http://health.state.tn.us/H1N1.htm>

## Swabs

Swab specimens should be collected using swabs with a synthetic tip (e.g., polyester or Dacron®) and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Do not use: swabs with cotton tips and wooden shafts or those made with calcium alginate. The swab specimen collection vials should contain 3ml of viral transport medium. More than 1 swab from the same patient may be placed in a single vial. The TDH lab cannot supply swabs or viral transport with the exception of the Sentinel provider network.

## Storing Clinical Specimens

All respiratory specimens should be kept at 4°C (refrigerated) until they can be shipped for testing. Ship refrigerated specimens as soon as possible, within 1 week.

## Shipping Clinical Specimens

At the present time, all influenza specimens should be packed with ice/cold packs and shipped as a Category B specimen sent to the State Laboratory in Nashville for testing, accompanied by the appropriate virology lab slip and reporting form for influenza specimens. Informed consent is not required. Fill out the Novel H1N1 PCR Specimen form. It is available at: <http://health.state.tn.us/H1N1.htm>

Address: Laboratory Services: Attn. Virology  
630 Hart Lane  
Nashville, Tennessee 37216  
Telephone: (615) 262-6351  
Fax: (615) 262-6393

\*Specimens should be sent by Priority Overnight Shipping on Mondays through Thursdays only for receipt within 24 hours. If shipping on Friday, please request Saturday delivery.

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