

**Vermont Department of Health**  
**Laboratory** Physical: 359 South Park Dr,  
Colchester, VT 05446 Mailing: PO Box 1125,  
Burlington, VT 05402-1125

1-800-660-9997 (VT only) or 1-802-338-4724

## Instructions for Collection and Submission of Specimens for Influenza Virus Testing (VDHL Kit 9)

**To report hospitalized patients, specimens being submitted from an institutional setting, or patients with an exposure history to avian influenza, health care providers should notify the VDH Epidemiology Division at 802-863-7240 or 1-800-640-4374 (VT only) available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

### Kit Contents

- Screw-cap tube of viral transport medium
- Sterile nasal swab
- Metal inner container
- VDHL Clinical Test Request form (Micro 220)
- Biohazard bag

### Specimen Collection

The following instructions explain how to collect a **nasal swab** specimen. The use of a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab is acceptable only when collected from the nasopharynx. An NP swab is **NOT** included in this kit. For patients with severe lower respiratory tract illness, a lower respiratory tract specimen (e.g., an endotracheal aspirate or bronchoalveolar lavage fluid) should be collected. These specimen types have a higher yield for detecting HPAI A(H5N1) and A(H7N9) viruses and may facilitate detection of other novel avian influenza A viruses.

1. Print patient name, date of birth, and date of collection on the viral transport medium collection tube.
2. Tilt patient's head back 70 degrees.
3. While gently rotating the swab, insert the swab less than one inch into nostril (until resistance is met at turbinates).

**\*If an alternate swab is needed**, a synthetic tip (e.g., polyester or Dacron®) and an aluminum or plastic shaft is acceptable. Specimens collected with cotton tipped swabs with wooden shafts or swabs made of calcium alginate cannot be tested at the lab and will be rejected.

4. Rotate the swab several times against nasal wall and repeat in other nostril using the same swab.
5. Put the swab into the transport medium and break the shaft at the score mark. If a score mark is not present, bend the shaft back and forth gently until it breaks. Ensure that the shaft does not protrude above the rim of the container after it is broken. Place the cap back on the tube and tighten it to prevent leakage.
6. Place labeled viral transport tube containing the swab into the metal container provided. Screw cap on tightly.
7. Fill out the requisition form (Micro 220) completely. **Please document any recent foreign travel history in the Travel History box (found on page 2).** To ensure results are reported correctly, please ensure the Clinical Lab Practice Information is accurately recorded.
8. Place the completed requisition form in the outside pocket of the biohazard bag. Place the metal container containing the specimen inside the large zippered compartment of the biohazard bag. This is important to ensure the safety of lab staff.

## **Specimen Storage, Shipment, and Test Schedule**

**Storage:** 2-8°C for up to 3 days after collection  
-70°C or lower if >3 days after collection

**Shipment:** Ship as soon as possible at refrigerated temperature (2-8°C) for up to 3 days. If the specimen will be received at the VDHL >3 days after collection, then ship frozen.

**Testing schedule:** Testing is performed Tuesdays and Fridays.

Follow shipping regulations for UN 3373 Biological Substance, Category B. All shipments must comply with current DOT/IATA shipping regulations.

**Patient information on the specimen container must match the patient information on the Micro 220 Clinical Test Request form. Improperly labeled specimens will be rejected.**

### **Specimen May be Rejected for the Following Reasons:**

- No patient information or mismatched identifiers on the specimen and the Micro 220 Clinical Test Request form (specimen tube must contain one of the following: patient name, date of birth, MRN, submitter/ID number)
- Specimen is submitted without the Micro 220 Clinical Test Request form
- Improper shipment temperature
- Too old to test (>3 days from date of collection and not shipped frozen)
- Date/Time of collection is missing
- Expired transport media
- Specimen leaked in transit and/or there is insufficient specimen for testing
- No swab received
- Inappropriate swab type received, including swabs with cotton tips, wooden shafts, or made of calcium alginate

If you have any comments or questions regarding these instructions, please call one of the telephone numbers listed on the front of this form.