

## INSTRUCTIONS COLLECTING STOOL SPECIMENS FOR VIRAL CULTURE AND PCR

### During Foodborne Outbreak Investigations

Revised May 6, 2015

The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) offers viral testing of stools as part of foodborne outbreak investigations. Submissions are accepted only from local health departments and state agencies.

The **first four days of illness** are the best time to collect a stool specimen. This increases the chance of finding viruses. Stool specimen collection kits are available from local health departments.

### PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

#### *Collecting Stool Specimens for Virus Isolation Using Collection Kits Obtained From Your Health Department*

- 1) Use the hat-shaped paper specimen collection device to collect a stool specimen.
- 2) Put the "hat" under the toilet seat and pass stool into the "hat".
- 3) Transfer stool into the screw-top specimen container until the specimen container about ½ full.
- 4) Screw the top tightly on the container.
- 5) Use adhesive tape to secure the screw-top tightly on the container.
- 6) Flush the remaining stool down the toilet and put the "hat" in a plastic bag before discarding it in the garbage.
- 7) Label the screw-top container with your name and collection date.
- 8) Put the screw-top container in a zip-lock bag with padding such as paper towels.
- 9) Refrigerate the specimen package (screw-top container, padding, zip-lock bag).
- 10) Take the specimen package to your local health department or call for additional instructions.

### LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS

#### *Sending Stool Specimens for Viral Isolation*

- 1) Remember that it takes two positive specimens to confirm the microbial cause of a foodborne outbreak. OSPHL will not test just a single specimen.
- 2) Send stool specimens for virus isolation in a screw-top container, NOT in Cary-Blair transport media.
- 3) Complete Steps 5–8, above, if needed. Add the outbreak number to the specimen package.
- 4) Put a properly completed *Virology /Immunology Request* inside a separate zip-lock bag in each specimen package.
- 5) Place the specimen packages(s) in a Styrofoam box with cold packs and padding so the specimen packages(s) won't bounce around in the box.
- 6) When using ground transportation (ex., Greyhound), put the Styrofoam box in a cardboard box.
- 7) When using a private courier in a dedicated vehicle (ex., state lab courier, Qwest, OML), don't put the Styrofoam box in a cardboard box.
- 8) When using air transportation (ex., FedEx) or the US Postal Service, put the Styrofoam box in a second container that can withstand the pressure changes of air transport. Please call the OSPHL Laboratory Response Network or the Operations Manager for assistance (503-693-4100).
- 9) For #7 above, label the outside containers with UN3373 diamond and the Biological Substance, Category B label on the outside of the cardboard box, plus the "To" and "From" addresses. **These, and no others, must be used.**
- 10) Shipping instructions:

Private carriers  
(ex., Greyhound, Fed Ex, Qwest)

Oregon State Public Health Laboratories 3150 N.W.  
229th Avenue, Suite 100  
Hillsboro, OR 97124-6536

US Postal Service

Oregon State Public Health Laboratories  
P.O. Box 275 Portland, OR  
97207-0275

Ask for Client Services Coordinator: Phone 503/693-4100 Fax 503/693-5605

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/CommunicableDisease/Pages/index.aspx>