

Version: 5/5/2023

Respiratory specimens submitted to the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) for influenza surveillance are part of the CDC-WHO collaboration. Selected specimens are submitted to CDC for further characterization. The project helps generate a comprehensive understanding of the antigenic, genetic, and antiviral properties of the viruses circulating internationally and informs vaccine development. Your participation in this program is requested and greatly appreciated.

Off-Season Update: When influenza is not at its peak (May 1-September 30), OHA is particularly interested in subtyping specimens collected from **severely ill individuals hospitalized in the intensive care unit (ICU)** to bolster surveillance for novel influenza cases and strains, including highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Complete instructions for specimen submission can be found at www.bitly.com/flu-orlab, and are summarized here for convenience.

Off-Season Specimen Selection:

Oregon Health Authority (OHA) asks that all Oregon hospitals submit influenza-positive specimens to OSPHL:

1. For all **hospitalized influenza-positive patients**.
 - **OHA is particularly interested in influenza-positive specimens from severely ill individuals admitted to an ICU.**
 - For the purposes of this surveillance, “hospitalized” is defined as patients admitted to your facility and includes those who would typically be admitted but may be boarded in other areas, e.g., the emergency department.
2. For any specimen exhibiting **atypical features** (e.g., un-subtypeable) for further characterization.

Specimen Collection:

1. Collect specimens within 3-5 days of symptom onset, and no later than 7 days after onset.
2. Collect an approved specimen type.¹ Use swabs made with a Dacron polyester tip or a flocked swab on a plastic shaft.
 - The following are not accepted for testing: wooden shaft swabs; cotton tip swabs; swabs with calcium alginate.

¹ Acceptable Specimen Types:

- Upper Respiratory: nasopharyngeal swab (preferred), nasal swab, throat swab, combination swabs (2 swabs from accepted specimens in one tube).
- Lower Respiratory: nasal aspirate, nasal wash, bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, tracheal aspirate, sputum, lung tissue.

3. Place swab in the Universal Transport Media (UTM), Viral Transport Media (VTM), or sterile saline tube.
 - Break off the shaft, leaving the swab tip inside the tube. If using dual swabs¹, place both swabs inside the same vial.
 - Tightly secure the cap of the container of media containing the specimen.
 - Failure to break off swabs will cause media to leak and the specimen will be unsatisfactory for testing.
4. Label the specimen tube.
 - Each tube must be labeled with at least **two** unique patient-specific identifiers (e.g., full patient name, date of birth, patient ID, or medical record number)
 - The identifiers on the tube must match the identifiers provided on the Test Request Form.
5. Complete the OSPHL Virology/Immunology Test Request Form, available at www.bitly.com/phl-forms.

Test Request Form:

Complete the OSPHL Virology/Immunology Test Request Form, available at www.bitly.com/phl-forms. Complete one request form for each specimen tube.

1. **Complete all required fields marked with an asterisk.**²
2. For this surveillance, in the Specimen Information section, complete the “Hospitalized?” box.
3. If admitted to the ICU, in the “Study ID” box, type or write “ICU.”
4. In the “Tests Requested” section, in the “Molecular” box, choose “MOL IA/IB QUAL: Influenza RT-PCR Screen.”³

Specimen Preparation, Storage, Handling:

1. Place the specimen tube in the sealable pocket of the specimen biohazard bag.
 - Be sure that the cap on the specimen tube is securely fastened.
2. Fold requisition for one specimen in half and place it in the outer pocket of the specimen biohazard bag with the patient information facing outward.
 - **Do not** place requisitions in the same compartment as the specimen.
3. Store specimens at **refrigerated temperatures (2-8°C) for up to 3 days** pending transport. Transport the specimen in a container which can maintain 2-8°C during transport, such as a Styrofoam or hard sided cooler with a frozen gel pack.
 - If specimen cannot be tested at OSPHL within three (3) days of collection, freeze the specimen(s), preferably at -70° C, and ship on dry ice as soon as possible.
 - Note: Even though specimens collected into UTM/VTM can often be stored at room temperature, surveillance specimens must maintain cooler temperatures because they may be forwarded to CDC for further characterization, including cell culture.

² Required fields include: patient name; date of birth; sex/gender; county of residence; submitting facility; ordering clinician; date of collection; specimen source; test requested

³ This is the best selection currently on the test request form. However, the CDC SARS-CoV-2 & Influenza A/B Multiplex Real-Time RT-PCR with reflex to sequencing or subtyping or lineage will be performed.

Shipping & Contact Information:
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Virology/Immunology Testing Section
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503-693-4100