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GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING SPECIMENS FOR INFLUENZA 2016-2017

CRITERIA FOR SUBMITTING SPECIMENS:

Patients with influenza-like illness (temperature $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 37.8°C orally, AND cough and/or sore throat), especially those:

- presenting at the beginning, peak, and end of the influenza season
- with severe disease
- with recent overseas travel
- occurring in an outbreak setting
- who have received this season's influenza vaccine.

COLLECTING SPECIMENS FROM PATIENTS WITH SUSPECTED INFLUENZA:

- **Please use the sterile swabs provided.** Only collect one nasal swab and one throat swab from each patient and place into one tube of viral transport medium (VTM). Break off sticks, only leaving swabs in the VTM. **Screw caps on tightly.** Afterward, the tube **MUST BE REFRIGERATED at 4°C !**
- Label each tube with the following: **patient's name, physician's name, date collected, and type of specimen**
- Complete a Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory Specimen Submittal Form (enclosed) for each tube.
- For shipping: Set the VTM tube with swabs in the plastic biohazard bag (STP-701) and the secondary envelope (STP-700) provided. Then place it in the plastic zip-lock bag with the specimen form and put in the Styrofoam icebox with the two frozen ice packs.
- Call courier (Golden State Overnight) **1-800-322-5555** for specimen pick-up ("remote pickup"). Use account # **35297**; our shipping address is on the air bill with the kit.
- Specimens can be shipped Monday through Thursday.
- Specimens can be stored at 4°C for up to 3 days. Please do not collect specimens if the hold time will exceed 3 days.
- Do NOT ship specimens on Fridays; for specimens collected late on Thursday or Friday, please store at 4°C and arrange for pick up on Monday (or Tuesday if over a holiday weekend). *However, please do not collect specimens if the hold time will exceed 3 days.*
- Freezing may decrease viability of the specimen and is not recommended unless a -70°C ultra freezer is available.
- Please batch samples, i.e., store any samples collected Monday – Wednesday in the refrigerator, then send all of them out on Wednesday or Thursday in one box. Please do not send multiple boxes with 1-2 samples each in one week.

Note: VTM can be stored at room temperature PRIOR to use for collecting samples. Please place cold packs in the freezer until ready to use. Replacement kits will be sent to you for each shipment we receive from you. Each provider should always have at least 1 kit and 2-3 VTM vials on hand. Please do not discard boxes at the end of the season as they are to be reused each year!

If you have any questions concerning submission of specimens or are running low on supplies (boxes/non-expired VTM), contact VRDL at 510-307-8585 or flu@cdph.ca.gov