

KHEL Influenza Specimen Submission Guidelines

KHEL provides Influenza viral culture testing for surveillance purposes and *does not have the capacity to test every patient who presents with respiratory symptoms*. Instead, the Laboratory requests that only a few representative samples be submitted. It is important to prioritize the specimens submitted to the KHEL Laboratory, using the following guidelines:

Recommended Number of Specimens (Test Load):

- ❖ About 1 or 2 samples per week early and late in the season.
- ❖ A **maximum** of about 5 specimens per week during the peak of the season.

Specimen Collection and Storage:

- ❖ VTM provided by KHEL to sentinel sites should be refrigerated and is stable until the date listed on the label. Other facilities must submit specimens on a suitable commercially-available viral transport collection system.
- ❖ Collect **throat, nasal or nasopharyngeal swab specimens** on sterile polyester (Dacron or rayon) tipped (**no calcium alginate**) swabs with plastic or metal shafts. **Wooden shafts are not acceptable**, since they absorb collection media and emit substances that inhibit isolation and test performance. **Cotton can likewise inhibit isolation and should be avoided.**
- ❖ Specimens from patients with multiple, characteristic Influenza symptoms are preferred. Classic symptoms include the sudden onset of:

Fever (at least 100° F)	Body aches (myalgias)
Cough	Fatigue (can be extreme), malaise
Sore throat	Runny or stuffy nose
Headache	Diarrhea and vomiting (usually in children; far less common in adults)
- ❖ Collect specimen as soon as possible after symptom onset; preferably within 24 hours, but **no later than 3 days** post onset. **Immediately** refrigerate culture specimens and ship specimens to KHEL as **soon as possible, preferably on the same day collected.**
- ❖ Always provide the date of onset and list the symptoms. Please include vaccine status, if known. Include the facility ID on each form. **DO NOT** send photocopies of forms – always use an original requisition.

Specimen Packaging and Transport:

- ❖ Package specimens according to current Biological Substance, Category B requirements for refrigerated samples, including frozen cold packs. Detailed packaging instructions are available on the KDHE web site: http://www.kdheks.gov/labs/packaging_and_shipping.html
Click on the “Virus Mailer (pdf)” link to access the pdf file.
- ❖ Sentinel sites should use prepaid postage labels provided by KHEL. **Do not make copies or use these labels for private use.**
- ❖ **Any insulated shippers provided by DHEL are the property of the State of Kansas and are intended for submitting samples to the DHEL Laboratory only. NO PRIVATE USE IS ALLOWED.**

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