

# Swine Influenza Specimen Submittal Guidelines

## Ventura County Public Health Laboratory

Who should be tested:

**Diagnostics** Clinicians should consider the possibility of swine influenza virus infections in patients presenting with **febrile respiratory illness** who:

1. Have traveled to or from a county or country where a case of SIV has been reported.
2. Have been in contact with ill persons from these areas in the 7 days prior to their illness onset.
3. Are hospitalized with a severe pneumonia consistent with influenza.

A *febrile respiratory illness* is defined as recent onset with a fever of 100°F or greater AND at least two of the following:

- a] rhinorrhea or nasal congestion, b] sore throat, c] cough

Specimens should be collected within the first 24-72 hours of onset of symptoms and no later than 5 days after onset of symptoms. Personnel collecting clinical specimens should wear an N95 respirator, goggles, disposable gown, and disposable gloves.

### Respiratory Specimens:

- Each specimen should be labeled with: **date of collection, specimen type, and patient name.**

Due to heavy demand, a shortage of Viral Transport Medium (VTM) containers currently exists. To stretch the available supplies we recommend:

- 1] If your facility intends to perform rapid flu testing and a nasal aspirate or nasal wash in saline is appropriate for your routine rapid test, collect that specimen only. Left-over specimen can be forwarded to the Public Health Laboratory for Influenza PCR. Specimens should be refrigerated and shipped on cold-pak to arrive within 24 hours.

We recommend forwarding of all POSITIVE Influenza A specimens and any Negative Influenza A specimens if patients meet Case definitions for ILI and travel/contact.

- 2] For patients who meet the suspect case guidelines and are not being tested by a rapid method:

At a minimum, collect a nasopharyngeal swab (nasopharyngeal wash or nasopharyngeal aspirate are also acceptable). Oropharyngeal (throat) swabs are acceptable, but may not have as high of a yield

Place the swabs in a standard container with 2-3 ml of viral transport media (VTM).

The same transport tube can be used for all swabs.

**DO NOT USE COTTON OR CALCIUM ALGINATE SWABS OR SWABS WITH A WOODEN SHAFT.**

Use of these swabs invalidates the specimen and may cause us to reject the sample.

In the absence of VTM, sterile saline can be substituted, but every effort should be made to transport the specimen so that it reaches the Public Health Laboratory within 24 hours.

- If the patient is hospitalized with pneumonia, specimens from the lower respiratory tract (e.g., tracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage) should also be obtained. Refrigerate and transport within 24 hours.

### Specimen Storage and Shipment:

The specimens should be kept refrigerated at 4°C and sent on cold packs if they can be received by the laboratory within five days of the date collected. If samples cannot be received by the laboratory within five days, they should be frozen at -70 °C or below and shipped on dry ice. Specimens should be shipped per usual protocol to your local public health laboratory at:

Ventura County Public Health Laboratory, 2240 E. Gonzales Rd, Suite 160, Oxnard, CA 93036  
Phone # for questions: (805) 981-5131