

Title	Influenza Specimen Collection and Transport
Specimen Requirements	1. Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab or throat swab is preferred. Nasal aspirates, nasal wash, sputum, BAL, bronchial wash, tracheal aspirates, and lung tissue are also acceptable.
Sampling Materials	1. Viral Transport Media (VTM)-available commercially. Some require refrigeration, others do not —check package insert. Dry swabs will not be accepted. 2. Swab - Swab material should be synthetic (e.g., rayon, polyester, Dacron). Calcium alginate or charcoal-impregnated swabs should not be used, nor should wood-shaft swabs. 3. Sterile containers and collection materials for sputum, aspirates, or washes. 4. Small catheter with a suction trap or bulb aspirator for collection of aspirates. 5. Cold packs or dry ice. 6. Insulated shipping boxes/containers with appropriate shipping labels.
Procedural Notes	1. Be sure to properly label the specimen tube with at least the patient's name, date of birth, and date of collection. 2. Check the expiration date on the VTM tube to ensure product is acceptable and will continue to be acceptable once received at IDOH Laboratories. 3. After collection, all specimens should be stored at refrigerated temperatures (2-8°C) as soon as possible, until shipped. If longer storage is required, place specimens (not serum/blood) in a -70°C freezer (NEVER store, even temporarily, in a regular, -20°C freezer — this temperature will kill viruses). Additionally, avoid freeze- thaw cycles which is also lethal to viruses. Once specimens are frozen, they must be shipped on dry ice and received at IDOH Laboratories frozen. Specimens submitted for the 2022-2023 Influenza season must be received at IDOH Laboratories within 3 days of collection if stored at refrigerated temperatures. 4. Specimens must be submitted to the IDOH Laboratories through LimsNet, an online system that will make results available as PDF files the minute they are released at the lab. To get a free LimsNet account established at your facility for electronic submission and results reporting, call the help desk at (888) 535-0011 or email to LimsAppSupport@isdh.in.gov. 5. After LimsNet submission is made, please print LimsNet coversheet. 6. Special Instructions for Specimen Collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. NP Swab: Insert Dacron-tipped swab through the nostril into the nasopharynx until tip reaches distance equivalent to that from the ear to the nostril of the patient. Rotate swab several times, remove and place swab into the VTM tube. b. Nasal Aspirates: Insert a small catheter with a suction trap or bulb aspirator though the nostrils into the nasopharynx. Apply suction while slowly removing the catheter or aspirator tip. The catheter or aspirator should be flushed with VTM. Place the specimen into the VTM tube. c. Throat Swab: Rub the tonsils and posterior pharynx with a Dacron-tipped plastic swab. Place the swab into the VTM tube. d. Nasal Wash: Place several milliliters of sterile saline into nostrils while patient's head is tilted back. Bring patient's head forward and catch saline flowing from the nostrils into a small container. Pour 1-2mL of specimen into the VTM tube. e. Sputum: Satisfactory quality implies the presence of mucoid or mucopurulent material and is of greater significance than volume. Ideally, a sputum specimen should have a volume of 3-5ml, although smaller quantities are acceptable if the quality is satisfactory.
Shipping Instructions	1. Wrap the labeled specimen container with absorbent material, place in a biohazard specimen bag, and seal bag. Be sure to package each specimen individually to avoid cross-contamination. 2. Place the LimsNet coversheet and any additional paperwork requested in the side pocket of the biohazard bag. Never place the paperwork in with the specimen just in case the specimen leaks during transit. If the specimen bag does not have 2 compartments, place the paperwork in a separate zip-top bag. 3. Place the specimen(s) in a Styrofoam container with sufficient cold packs to maintain 4°C during shipment. For swabs, sputum, aspirates, and washes, dry ice can also be used if the specimen is frozen and/or transport time may be longer than 24 hours. If dry ice is used, do not form an airtight seal on the Styrofoam container because dry ice sublimates into carbon dioxide gas. 4. Place the Styrofoam container into a cardboard shipping box, close lid, and seal. 5. Ship or transport by courier, the box compliant with DOT and IATA regulations (Category B UN3373). Ship to: Indiana Department of Health Laboratories Virology Laboratory 550 W. 16th Street, Suite B Indianapolis, IN 46202
Reporting and TAT	Results available within 1-2 business days. Test Referral: Specimens may be forwarded to the CDC for additional testing.