

MLS Laboratory Update: Specimen Submissions for Respiratory Disease Surveillance

FEBRUARY 12, 2024

Purpose of this Message:

To communicate to clinical laboratory partners of modifications to laboratory specimen submission guidance for seasonal respiratory disease surveillance. Additionally, we are providing clarification on specimen stability and shipping guidance.

Action Item:

Clinical laboratory partners should review the information below and reduce the number of weekly, voluntary influenza specimens submitted.

Background:

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) conducts respiratory disease surveillance each season through case reporting and laboratory submission pathways. The specimens that clinical laboratory partners send to the MDH Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) are an essential part of this surveillance and allow for genotyping, subtyping and further characterization of influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and SARS-CoV-2. This year MDH-PHL began sequencing influenza and RSV in addition to SARS-CoV-2. At the beginning of the season, MDH-PHL provided guidance on appropriate media types, shipping conditions and the ideal number of specimens required for the laboratory surveillance program. Thanks to your partnership, MDH-PHL has completed influenza sequencing pilot studies and is able to reduce the requested number of influenza-positive specimens.

Additional Information:

Specimen Collection and Transport:

- Specimens should be submitted in a viral transport media (VTM) (e.g., VTM, M4, M5, or M6), universal transport media (UTM), saline, phosphate buffered saline (PBS), or liquid Amies.
- Specimens stored refrigerated must be received within 3 days of collection and shipped on cold packs.
- Specimens stored frozen must be received within 7 days of collection and shipped on dry ice (preferred) or must ship on cold packs.

- Specimens must ship in a container that will maintain temperature throughout transport.

Specimen Submission:

Complete forms electronically, then print and include with shipment. This will ensure that we are receiving the most up-to-date submission form and prevent possible delay in processing specimens.

Influenza Surveillance

Laboratories should submit **two** unique patient specimens that are positive for influenza (either A or B) each week for surveillance purposes. Please use one of the following forms:

- [Influenza Hospitalized Surveillance \(1492\) Submission Form \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdhfluform1492.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdhfluform1492.pdf), For hospitalized patients with cases of confirmed influenza or influenza-like illness.
- [Influenza Non-Hospitalized Surveillance \(493\) Submission Form \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdhfluform493.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdhfluform493.pdf), For MDH epidemiology cluster investigation, influenza and influenza-like illness cases for laboratory surveillance.

Do not submit specimens with mixed infections for influenza testing

- Influenza + RSV
- influenza + SARS-CoV-2

Please submit specimens specifically for SARS-CoV-2 or RSV sequencing. Use the designated submission forms listed below. Add in comment section the mixed infection information

SARS-CoV-2 and RSV Surveillance:

Laboratories performing RSV and COVID-19 rapid testing methods (rapid antigen or molecular assays) should submit up to 40 patient positive samples, for each pathogen, per week.

- To submit SARS-CoV-2 specimens, use the [COVID-19 Special Request Form \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdhcovidspecial.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdhcovidspecial.pdf)
- To submit RSV specimens, use the [General Infectious Disease Laboratory Submission Form \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdh_lab_submission.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mdh_lab_submission.pdf). In the Virology Test Requested section, select 'RSV Sequencing – RSVSEQ' from the dropdown or write in the space provided on the form.

General Notes:

- The guidance found here is intended for laboratory specimen submissions only. Specific respiratory disease case reporting rules and guidance can be found within the [MDH Respiratory Illness Page \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/respiratory/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/respiratory/index.html)

- Please include testing results, methods used (DFA, rapid EIA, PCR, etc.) and name of test kit(s) in the comment section at the bottom of the form.
- MDH-PHL offers to facilities **both** electronic order entry and report delivery using a submission portal. The submission portal allows for secure, electronic delivery of test orders and results. If interested, please contact Ginny Dobbins, health informatics supervisor, 651-201-4546 Ginny.Dobbins@state.mn.us or health.idl.informatics@state.mn.us.

Questions:

For questions on laboratory testing please contact: Scott Cunningham, Virology Unit Supervisor; 651-201-5032, Scott.Cunningham@state.mn.us.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5200.