

**Specimen Submission Guidelines for Suspect Influenza Virus Infection**  
**Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Laboratories Administration (October 31, 2023)**

**I. Preferred/Acceptable/Unacceptable Specimens**

**Preferred** respiratory specimens for the CDC Influenza SARS-CoV-2 (Flu SC2) Multiplex Assay:

The following should be collected as soon as possible after onset of illness: nasopharyngeal swab, nasal aspirate or wash, or a combined nasopharyngeal swab with oropharyngeal swab. If these specimens cannot be collected, a nasal swab or oropharyngeal swab is acceptable. For patients who are intubated, an endotracheal aspirate should be collected. Broncho alveolar lavage (BAL) and sputum specimens are also acceptable.

**Acceptable** specimens for the CDC Influenza SARS-CoV-2 (Flu SC2) Multiplex Assay:

- Upper respiratory specimens:
  - Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab
  - Nasal (N) swab
  - NP/N aspirate or washing
  - Oropharyngeal (O) swab
  - Throat (T) swabs
- Lower respiratory tract specimens:
  - Sputum (S)
  - Lower respiratory tract aspirates (TA)
  - Bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL)

**Unacceptable** specimens CDC Influenza SARS-CoV-2 (Flu SC2) Multiplex Assay (**specimens will be rejected for testing**):

- Respiratory specimens in Rapid Test Lysis Buffer
- Less than 1ml of Universal Transport Media or Viral Transport Media
- Calcium alginate swabs

**II. Viral Transport Medium (VTM) Specimen Collection Kit Instructions**

Local health department can order the VTM Specimen collection Kit by calling (443) 681-3777 or by faxing a completed request form (<http://maryland.gov/laboratories/docs>) to (443) 681-3950.

The VTM specimen Collection Kit from MDH Laboratories Administration contains:

- Clear plastic biohazard bag
- Three swabs for collection of desired specimen: Flocked (NP), Polyester Tipped (N), and Foam (OP/T)
- Tube of VTM
- [MDH Form 4676 Infectious Agents: Culture Detection](#) (paper version). An online fillable version of this is form (MDH 4676) can be found by clicking the "MDH Form 4676 Infectious Agent: Culture Detection text OR by going to the address below:
  - <https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/docs/MDH%204676%20Infectious%20Agents%20Culture%20Detection%20Training%20Form%20Fillable%201-2019.pdf>

Upon receipt of the specimen collection kit:

1. Note the expiration date printed on the tube of VTM. **Do not collect any specimens using this medium after the expiration date!**
2. Kit, including VTM, should be stored at room temperature.

To collect swab specimens:

1. Collect specimen from patient using the appropriate swab for the specimen being collected.
2. Place swab in VTM tube. **Do not collect any specimens using this medium after the expiration date!**
3. Break swab at the snap point of the shaft, so that the swab fits in the tube. Cap VTM tube, making sure that the cap is securely screwed onto the tube.
4. Wrap parafilm around the cap.
5. Label specimen VTM tube with the patient's name (**exactly** as it appears on the lab slip), date of birth, and collection date.
6. Place VTM tube in clear plastic biohazard bag.
7. Fill out lab slip as described below.
8. Place lab slip in secondary pouch on outside of clear plastic bag.
9. Place assembled collection kit at 4°C or cooler with cold gel packs until transport to the laboratory.

III. **Laboratory Test Request Slip (Infectious Agents: Culture Detection) Instructions (see Influenza [Types A & B] Test Request Sample Form) [MDH Form 4676 Infectious Agents: Culture Detection](#) (paper version) should come in the provided kit. An online fillable version of this is form (MDH 4676) can be found by clicking the "MDH Form 4676 Infectious Agent: Culture Detection text OR by going to the address below:**

- a. <https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/docs/MDH%204676%20Infectious%20Agents%20Culture%20Detection%20Training%20Form%20Fillable%201-2019.pdf>

1. See instruction on how to fill the [MDH Form 4676 Infectious Agents: Culture Detection](#) on page 3.

- a. Sections 1-11 should be filled. Required fields are mandatory.

#### IV. **Packaging and Shipping**

1. **Within 72 hours** of collection, specimens should be refrigerator (4°C) and transported with cold gel packs to the laboratory as soon as possible.
2. If specimen delivery is to be delayed, specimens should be frozen at ( $\leq -70^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and transported overnight on dry ice until processing.
3. Please deliver all specimens to the MDH Laboratories Administration at 1770 Ashland Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21205. Alternatively, please deliver to your local health department for shipment to the MDH Laboratories Administration.

**For questions, please contact the Division of Molecular Biology Laboratory at (443) 681-3923 or (443) 681-3924**