

# ProvLab Respiratory Specimen Collection Guidelines

Check ProvLab Bulletins for most current information on specimen collection, testing and interpretation of lab results:  
<http://www.provlab.ab.ca> or <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/3290.asp%20>

ProvLab Bulletin (May 11, 2011) - New Laboratory Policy - Acceptance of Laboratory Samples and Test Requests.

## The requisition must be completed to include

- Client/resident's full name (first and last names)
- Client/resident's Personal Health Number (PHN) or unique numerical assigned equivalent
- Client/resident demographics including: date of birth (DOB), gender, address, phone number
- Physician name (full name), address/location
- Test orders clearly indicated, including body site and sample type, date and time of collection
- Clinical history and other clinical information
- Facility name, and if applicable, unit
- EI# (assigned by the ProvLab and provided to Public Health Lead investigator)
- Fax number of outbreak facility/unit or ICP/ICD office
- Results will be faxed to the outbreak facility/unit or ICP/ICD **when it is noted on the requisition**, and reported to Zone Outbreak Response Lead.

**Note: Viral history information is not required as long as the EI# is clearly recorded on the requisition.**

## Specimen transport

- Sites must collect specimens as directed by Public Health and arrange for delivery to the laboratory
- Follow current Provincial Laboratory standards for transporting specimens. <http://www.provlab.ab.ca/guide-to-services.pdf>.
- AHS is reviewing current transportation processes within Zones to identify gaps and make appropriate recommendations.

## Nasopharyngeal and throat swab for detection of respiratory infections

### General Information

- The amount of virus is greatest in acute phase of illness, usually within the first 48-72 hours of symptom onset.
- NP swabs are the preferred specimens for respiratory virus testing and pertussis testing
- If nasopharyngeal swabs are difficult to collect, or if nasal secretions are minimal, throat swabs collected in viral transport media are acceptable alternatives.
- Collect up to three NP or throat swabs from separate cases, in the acute phase of illness, to determine the etiological agent of a suspected viral respiratory outbreak. Submit these as a batch of samples.
- If one or more of these samples are positive and an etiological agent has been identified, then further swabs should not be collected or submitted without prior consultation with the Zone Outbreak Response Lead/MOH.

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- If three samples have been tested and all are negative for respiratory virus, the Zone Outbreak Response Lead will consult with the ProvLab point person/designate for the EI# (e.g., MOC\VOC) for further discussion e.g. if the clinical situation for the EI# has changed and additional testing needs to be done.
- Results of the Respiratory Pathogen Panel (RPP) by molecular testing are usually available within 48hrs.

Note: If the specimens are for outbreak diagnosis, ensure specimen is transported to the lab ASAP. The EI# must be included on each requisition so that specimens receive appropriate testing. Rural facilities to transport lab specimens to ProvLab as directed by the Outbreak Response Lead or by the fastest means possible.