

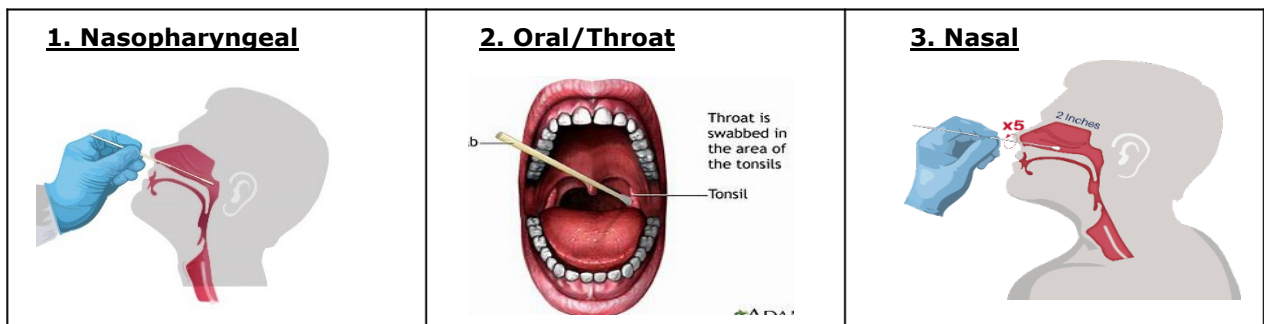
The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) offers Influenza and other respiratory viral testing on patients with Influenza-like illness (ILI) as part of a WHO-Collaborating Laboratory Influenza surveillance program.

Specimen Collection

1. Nasopharyngeal swabs are collected in 15 mL screw capped tube with 3 mL of transport medium (e.g., VTM). Store at room temperature until use. **Cotton-tipped swabs with wooden shafts are NOT acceptable and will be rejected.**
2. Label tube with patient's first name, last name, date of birth (DOB), and collection date.
3. Specimen label MUST match submission form, or specimen may be rejected.
4. Specimens should be collected within 1-4 days of the onset of symptoms.
5. All respiratory swabs collected from the same patient should be inserted into the same tube of transport media, one tube per patient.
6. Refrigerate specimens until ready for packaging and shipping. If the specimens cannot arrive at the Bureau of Laboratories within 24-48 hours of collection, freeze and ship them frozen the next business day.

Acceptable Specimens for Influenza Testing

1. Nasopharyngeal swabs (NP – preferred and required for the full respiratory panel)
 - Pass the NP swab through the nares. (See diagram below)
 - Resistance will be met, and this will confirm contact with the nasopharynx.
 - Rub the swab tip several times across the mucosal surface. This will loosen and collect cellular material. Allow a time of contact of up to 30 seconds.
 - Withdraw the swab and place in the viral transport media. Make sure liquid medium covers the swab tip. Break or cut the end of the swab and screw the vial lid on tightly.
2. Oropharyngeal (OP) or Throat Swab
 - Using plastic handled swab, vigorously swab both the tonsils and the posterior pharynx. (See diagram below)
 - Place swab into the transport media. Make sure liquid medium covers the swab tip.
 - Break or cut the end of the swab. Screw the vial lid on tightly.
3. Anterior Nasal
 - Insert the entire soft end of the swab into your nostril no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch (1.5 cm). (See diagram below)
 - Slowly rotate the swab, gently pressing against the inside of your nostril at least 4 times for a total of 15 seconds. Get as much nasal discharge as possible on the soft end of the swab.
 - Gently remove the swab.
 - Using the same swab, repeat swabbing in your other nostril with the same end of the swab.
 - Place the swab in the sterile tube and snap off the end of the swab at the break line, so that it fits comfortably in the tube. Place the cap on the tube and screw down tightly to prevent leakage.



Bureau of Laboratories

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BOL Specimen Submission Form:

1. Please include a submission form with each **test request: Influenza Surveillance**. Fill out the form with all the required fields like data collected. Date of onset. Testing will not be initiated without the required fields. Use link below for the submission form.
2. Patient's information on the specimen submission form must match the information on the specimen container or else testing will **NOT** be performed.
3. Submitter name, complete address, and contact information, including both phone and fax number.
4. Label the specimen with patient's name, DOB, the specimen source, and the collection date.

PA LINK to website: [BOL Micro Specimen Submission Form.pdf \(pa.gov\)](#)

Specimen Packaging and Storage Instructions:

1. Place the tube in compartment of the biohazard bag and seal the bag. Place the paperwork in the outer pocket of the biohazard bag.
2. Store the specimen at 2 - 8°C until shipping and no longer than 24-48 hrs. If a delay in shipping is anticipated, freeze the specimen at -20°C or lower.
3. Ship as a Category B diagnostic specimen to the address on the submission form and include a return address.

BOL Specimen Submission Form

1. Patient name (last, first, middle), street address, city, zip code, and county.
2. DOB, sex, date of onset, date of collection, specimen source, and collection date.
3. Submitter name, complete address, and contact information, including both phone and fax number.
4. Test requested from BOL - **Influenza Surveillance**.
5. Label the specimen with patient's name, DOB, the specimen source, and the collection date.
6. Patient's information on the specimen submission form **must match** the information on the specimen container or else testing will **NOT** be performed.

Specimen Storage, Packaging, and Shipping Instructions

1. Place the specimen tube in a biohazard bag and seal the bag. Place the paperwork in the outer pocket of the biohazard bag.
2. Ship the specimen as soon as possible after collection.
3. Refrigerate the specimens if they will not be shipped immediately. If specimen will not arrive at the Bureau of Laboratories within 72 hours of collection, freeze specimens and ship the next business day overnight with cold packs/dry ice (specimen **MUST** be kept cold until it reaches the laboratory).
4. Call Quick Courier at **800-355-1004** to request pickup of a "**Flu Pickup Account #PA-BOLOT**" package for next day delivery to the Bureau of Laboratories.
5. A dispatcher will pick up the specimen from the public health center and deliver it to the Bureau of Laboratories the next business day. Calls to Quick Courier must be made by 12 noon for delivery the next business day.
6. Do not ship specimens out on Fridays, weekends, day before a holiday or on holidays.

Contact **Hephzibah Tagaram Ph.D., Virology & Immunology Supervisor**, at **484-870-6380** or htagaram@pa.gov if you have questions.

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