

Guide to Request for Testing for Novel Influenza Virus

1. Contact information

1. For notification of suspected cases:

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| During office hours | Central Notification Office | 2477 2772 |
| Outside office hours | Medical Control Officer | 7116 3300 - 9179 |
2. For enquiries on laboratory testing:

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|---------------------------------|--|
| Medical Staff | 2319 8574/252 |
| Culture and Serology Laboratory | 2319 8237/9 |
| Facsimile | 2319 5989 |
| Address | Virology Division |
| | 9/F Public Health Laboratory Centre |
| | 382 Nam Cheong Street, Shek Kip Mei, Kowloon |

2. Indications for testing

Specimens should be sent to the Virology Division for testing for patients with:

- Clinical features of severe influenza infection, and
- Epidemiological suspicion of infection with a novel influenza virus, e.g. exposure to infected poultry or infected human,
- With or without a positive result for direct influenza A antigen detection*

3. Specimen collection

1. Specimens for viral culture and direct detection tests should be obtained in the acute phase, preferably within 3 days of onset, of the illness:
 - Nasopharyngeal aspirate (NPA) (or throat & nasal swab in a single container if NPA is not obtainable)
 - Testing of other specimens, such as stool and rectal swabs, may be considered
 - Place specimen in viral transport medium
2. Acute and convalescent antibody titre:
 - Acute clotted blood/serum should be collected as soon as possible, preferably within 7 days, after onset of illness
 - Convalescent clotted blood/serum should be collected at least 2 weeks after onset of illness
 - Place specimen in plain bottle without anticoagulants

4. Laboratory request form

1. A laboratory request form, together with the "Request for Novel Influenza Virus Testing" form, obtainable from the Virology Division, must be completed legibly in full and accompany each specimen, in order to ensure expedient specimen processing.
2. The specimen container must be labeled with patient identifiers matching those on the request form. Incompletely labeled specimens will be rejected.

5. Transport of specimen

1. Ensure container is properly capped without leakage.
2. Place the specimen container in a zip-locked plastic bag with the request form outside the bag.
3. For transport, place specimens in a rigid container at 4°C, and keep specimens upright to minimize the possibility of spillage.
4. Specimens should arrive at the Virology Division within 24 hours of collection.

*In case direct influenza A testing is undertaken, all procedures must be performed in a laboratory with Biosafety Level 2 standards and inside a biological safety cabinet.