

**NATIONAL INFLUENZA LABORATORY  
DEPARTMENT OF VIROLOGY  
MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
COLOMBO – SRI LANKA**

**Guidelines on collection and transportation of specimens from patients with Influenza Like Illness (ILI).**

**Criteria for selection of patients for ILI:**

**Case Definition :**

Those with,

1. Fever of > 38°C
2. Cough
3. Rhinorrhea or nasal congestion
4. Sore throat

With or without,

- Contact history with another patient with ILI

Or

- Recent travel abroad

**Presenting with following danger signs :**

**In Children**

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Reduced urine output or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improving but then to return with fever and worse cough)

**In Adults**

- Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms improving but then to return with fever and worse cough

**Type of specimens & how to collect them:**

1. Nasopharyngeal aspirate (NPA)
- \* 2. Two nasal & 1 throat swab
3. Tracheal aspirate
4. Broncho- Alveolar Lavage (BAL)
- \*\* 5. Postmortem biopsy of lung

\* Nasal swabs – Insert flexible fine shafted swab into nostril and rotate swab. Let swab rest in place for several seconds to absorb secretions. Use separate swab to each nostril place into Virus Transport Medium (VTM). Place both swabs in the same VTM bottle.

Throat swabs – Vigorously swab both tonsil areas and place in VTM. Use tongue depressor to depress tongue so that contamination of swab with saliva is prevented.

**All 3 swabs ( 2 nasal swabs and 1 throat swab) should be transported in one bottle of VTM.**

\*\*True cut needle biopsy taken soon after death. 3 autopsy samples should be sent;  
1<sup>st</sup> sample in VTM,  
2<sup>nd</sup> sample in alcohol  
3<sup>rd</sup> sample in formalin.

**Note: All samples should be transported in VTM & in ice.**

VTM should be obtained from the Department of Virology, Room No : 437 or specimens counter No: 811, Medical Research Institute, Colombo.