

# North Dakota Department of Health

## Influenza Specimen Collection and Handling

### Specimen Collection for Influenza:

Each specimen must be labeled with the patient's first and last name, date of birth, specimen source, and collection date.

Use only Dacron or rayon swabs with plastic or metal shafts. Calcium alginate swabs and cotton swabs with wooden shafts are **unacceptable**.

**Nasopharyngeal Swab** – Carefully swab the posterior nasopharyngeal area via the external nares with a dry sterile nasopharyngeal swab. Place the swab into viral transport medium. Screw the cap on tightly.

**Nasal Swab** – Insert dry swab into nasal passage and allow it to absorb secretions. Place swabs into viral transport medium. Screw the cap on tightly.

**Throat Swab** – Vigorously rub the posterior wall of the pharynx with a dry, sterile, swab. The swab should not touch the tongue or buccal mucosa. Place the swab into viral transport medium. Screw the cap on tightly.

**Nasal Aspirate/Wash** –Specimens are placed into viral transport medium. Screw the cap on tightly.

**Lower Respiratory Tract Specimens** – These specimens include bronchoalveolar lavage fluid, bronchial aspirates, bronchial washes, endotracheal aspirates, endotracheal washes, tracheal aspirates, and lung tissue. Place the sample into viral transport medium. Screw the cap on tightly.

### Shipment of Influenza Specimens:

Ship specimens immediately following collection. Samples can be stored at 2-8°C for up to 7 days. All specimens should be shipped with ice packs in insulated containers. If a shipment will be delayed because of holidays or weekends, freeze and hold specimens at -70°C and ship on dry ice.