Influenza sentinel laboratories are select laboratories around the state that have agreed to submit residual influenza-positive specimens or viral isolates to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories (WAPHL) for influenza subtyping and screening for resistance to oseltamivir. Subtyping is performed using real-time reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) assays developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC-developed pyrosequencing protocols are used to screen for mutation associated with oseltamivir resistance. A subset of the specimens received at the WAPHL will be forwarded to the CDC to aid national surveillance activities including vaccine strain selection.

Test results for sentinel laboratory specimens are used for influenza surveillance purposes and are not intended for diagnostic purposes. If diagnostic testing is needed, please submit specimens according to the instructions in the document entitled *Influenza Virus Testing at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories (WAPHL)*.

Selecting specimens to submit to WAPHL

- During periods of low influenza activity (e.g., summer), sentinel laboratories should submit all clinical specimens which test positive for influenza in real time without delay (if possible).
- Once influenza is actively circulating in Washington State, sentinel laboratories should submit up to 5 clinical specimens that test positive for influenza every week. This number will be updated as the season peaks. Please select the first positive influenza specimens received during a given week.
- Laboratories can submit viral isolates or influenza-positive clinical specimens. Acceptable clinical specimen types include nasopharyngeal swabs, nasal aspirate/wash, nasal swab, throat swab, nasopharyngeal/throat swab, tracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL), and bronchial aspirate/wash. Please do not submit extracted RNA.

Storage and shipping of specimens

- Please submit residual clinical specimens collected in viral transport medium. If a clinical specimen was collected in saline, transfer 1 cc of the saline specimen and swab into 1 cc of viral transport media.
- Optimal testing performance is obtained with freshly-collected specimens stored and shipped refrigerated (2–8°C) that arrive at the WAPHL for processing within 72 hours of collection. If you are unable to ship all the residual specimens in a given batch for arrival at the WAPHL within 72 hours of collection, please freeze each specimen at ≤ -70°C as soon as possible after collection and then store them frozen until they are shipped to the WAPHL on dry ice.
- Shipping containers will be provided by the WAPHL. You will be provided at least two sets of shipping materials. After receiving a specimen shipment from your lab, the WAPHL will decontaminate the container and return it to you.
- Place a completed **INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE FORM** in the OUTER pouch of the plastic biohazard envelope. Do not place any paperwork in the inner pouch along with the specimens.

- Pack and label clinical specimens as Biological Substances, UN 3373. Pack and ship according to United States Department of Transportation and United States Postal Service regulations. **NOTE: Be sure to uncover the HazMat labels (UN3373 and Dry Ice) on the outer box prior to shipping specimens.**

- Use the WAPHL preprinted FedEx labels and ship using “standard overnight” delivery. Your package will arrive at WAPHL at approximately 10 am the next day (the same time as FedEx “priority overnight,” but FedEx “standard overnight” is less expensive). Ship specimens Monday through Thursday to:
  
  Washington State Public Health Laboratories  
  Attn: Virology Laboratory  
  1610 NE 150th Street  
  Shoreline, WA 98155

- Please contact the WAPHL Virology Laboratory for further clarifications or specific questions regarding shipping instructions: (206) 418-5458.

**Reporting of results**

- All subtyping and antiviral resistance screening results will be reported in aggregate form. Subtyping results will be reported for each individual site, while antiviral resistance screening results will be reported as aggregate data for all specimens tested. Subtyping results for specimens submitted from an individual site will not be available until a minimum of five specimens have been tested.

- Individual reports will be generated only for specimens testing positive for a novel influenza virus or mutations associated with antiviral resistance.

- During periods of low prevalence (e.g., summer), summary reports may be generated for individual laboratories upon request after a minimum of five specimens have been tested from their site.

- Once influenza is actively circulating, routine summary reports that include data for the entire sentinel laboratory network will be provided electronically (via e-mail) once a month to all participants and their corresponding local health jurisdictions. If you do not want to include results from your laboratory in the summary reports distributed to the network, please contact us so that alternative arrangements can be made to provide your results.

**Kit Contents** – please verify contents upon receipt

- UN3373 Category B Shipper (outer box)
- Two 95kPa bags (HMS-81824)
- Laminated instructions (reusable)
- Return FedEx shipping air bill
- Five Influenza Surveillance Only forms