



October 2003

Respiratory Virus Cultures Flu Season 2003

Respiratory viruses are important pathogens causing infections in both adults and children. With more antiviral drugs available, the early and rapid laboratory detection of these pathogens may have a significant impact on patient management, as well as epidemiology.

With the impending flu season, the Microbiology Department would like to remind you of two options available for the detection of these respiratory viruses.

The only acceptable source types for these two tests are respiratory sources. These include nasopharyngeal swabs, aspirates or washes; throat swabs; bronchoalveolar lavages and respiratory secretions. All specimens should be stored refrigerated (2-8°C) and submitted to the laboratory as soon as possible.

Influenza Virus Testing – Influenza antigen (code 5647) and a Respiratory Virus Culture (to be done by the Department of Health –code 5648) are to be ordered as Influenza Virus Detection (code 5646).

In collaboration with the Hawaii State Department of Health's Epidemiology Branch, its ongoing influenza surveillance-monitoring program will involve Influenza A/B Antigen testing by Diagnostic Laboratory Services. A duplicate sample will be referred to the Department of Health Laboratory for a respiratory viral culture.

The clinician will collect a specimen for the antigen test on a plain dry swab, and for the culture in M4 (or M4-RT) viral media. The influenza collection kits are available from our supply department, and the test is available year-round.

Rapid Respiratory Virus Culture (code 251)

A rapid culture method utilizing immunofluorescence detection is used to screen for 7 respiratory viruses. These include Adenovirus, Influenza A and B, Parainfluenza types 1, 2, and 3, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). This test is done by the Microbiology Department at DLS.

All specimens submitted for this request is to be transported in M4 (or M4-RT) viral media, which is also available through our supply department. Though this test is offered during the flu season (October through March), its availability may be expanded based on prevalence of respiratory infections beyond these dates.

Please contact the Microbiology Department at 589-5203 for additional information on either of these two tests.