

Useful information - Avian Influenza & Swine Flu

Guidelines for assessing possible cases

If avian influenza is suspected the patient should be seen at home if possible and the practitioner should wear protective personal equipment (PPE) when assessing them. This includes a mask (preferably P2/N95), gloves, gown and eye protection (goggles, visor or face shield). If the patient presents to the surgery they should be given a mask on arrival and taken immediately to a separate consulting room.

Please contact the Department of Human Services on 1300 651 160 BEFORE sending any specimens to the laboratory.

Taking nose and throat swabs:

- o GLOVES AND A MASK (with eye protection) should both be worn when collecting nose and throat swabs.

Nose

- o Tilt the patient's head back gently, with one hand, and steady the patient's chin. With the other hand, insert the cotton bud end of the dry sterile swab into the patient's right nostril. The swab should be rubbed vigorously against the turbinate in the nostril to ensure the swab contains cells as well as mucous from the nostril. Withdraw the swab from the nostril.
- o Remove the cap from the tube of transport medium. Break off (or cut with scissors) the end of the swab's plastic shaft, ensuring that the entire swab can be sealed within the tube. Loosely recap the tube. Discard the remaining end of the swab.
- o Repeat the procedure with a new dry sterile swab in the patient's left nostril. Place the swab in the same tube of viral transport medium with the other swab.

Throat

- o To perform the throat swab, remove another swab from the packaging and ask the patient to open his/her mouth and stick out their tongue. Use a wooden spatula to press the tongue downward to the floor of the mouth. This will avoid contamination of the swab with saliva. Firmly swab both of the tonsillar arches and the posterior naso-oropharynx, without touching the sides of the mouth.
- o Remove the swab, which should be thoroughly wet with throat secretions. Remove the cap from the same tube as contains the two nose swabs and break off the shaft as before. Now firmly screw the cap back on the tube. Discard the end of the swab.

Label the transport media with the patient's initials, date of birth, case number and date of collection.

Place the transport media in the plastic bag provided, and complete the request form (making sure to include the name of your facility). Refrigerate the specimen until it is sent to the laboratory.

Masks should NOT be touched during wear and should NOT be worn around the neck at any time. When the masks are removed they should be handled by the ties only. Both gloves and masks should be disposed of in an infectious waste bag.

REMEMBER - WASH YOUR HANDS before and after the procedure!