

National Virus Reference Laboratory: Respiratory Viral Testing Q&As for Community Services



What specimen do I send?

The recommended swab for performing a multiplex respiratory viral PCR is the Copan UTM™ swab

Swabs can be ordered via the [NVRL website](#) and will be sent out via An Post.

See the link below for orders: [Swab Order form](#)



How do I order a test?

The test can be ordered using the Respiratory Virus PCR request form, found on the NVRL website

[NVRL Respiratory PCR Request form](#)

If there is concern for an outbreak, **no more than 5 samples** should be sent as per Public Health guidance.

How do I package the specimen for transport? It is the responsibility of the sender of the specimen to arrange packaging and transport.

Specimens require Category B transport.

- Specimen to be sent should be stored in a secure (preferably plastic) primary container.
- Wrap the container in tissue or cotton wool, which will act as absorbent material in event of any spillages.
- This should be placed in a biohazard bag
- Place the biohazard bag with the sample in a padded (jiffy bag) envelope
- Label the outer packaging with a hazard warning label, 'Diagnostic Specimen'
- Place the name, address and contact number of the destination laboratory (NVRL) on the outside of the box. Please avoid the use of staples for the closure of packages as these present a safety hazard to NVRL laboratory staff.
- Place the name, address and contact number of the originator on the outside of the envelope of transport container
- The specimen can be transported under the appropriate temperature conditions.
- UN3373 packaging can be used – as below, including the label 'Biological Substance, Category B'.

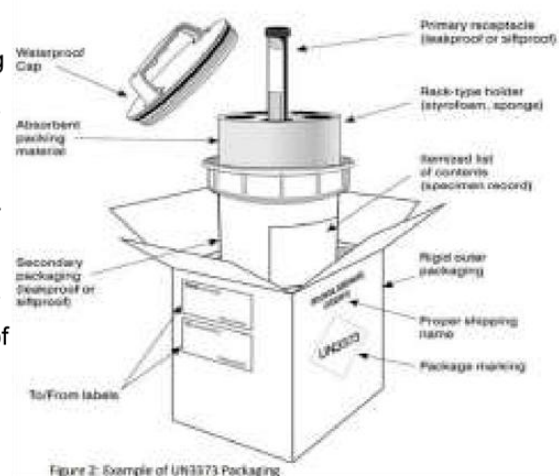


Figure 2: Example of UN3373 Packaging

[NVRL User Manual and Pathogen Index](#)

How do I transport the specimen?

Do not send samples via a GP or An Post.

NVRL recommends arranging delivery of samples directly to NVRL via a licensed courier. This ensures a faster time to result.

If a sample is taken over the weekend, this should be stored in a fridge awaiting transport.

The NVRL has a drop-box for overnight deliveries. A sample can be dropped there overnight for next day testing.



When is testing carried out?

Testing is carried out daily, Monday to Friday during the winter season. **Testing is NOT available out of hours or at the weekend.**

The swab must be received by 9am to be eligible for same day testing.

The ability to test swabs will depend on laboratory capacity. Please include clinical information to ensure appropriate prioritisation of testing.

How will I get a result?

Results will be sent out by Healthlink or via the post if Healthlink is not available.

Healthlink facilitates the rapid delivery of results. Organisations are strongly recommended to utilise Healthlink where possible. If your organisation already has Healthlink, please contact Healthlink to receive results from the NVRL.

Results may also be sent to the patient's GP. Please specify where to send the results if this is not appropriate.

Results are available Monday to Friday 9:00 to 17:30. Results are not available out of hours or at the weekend.

The following **Acute Respiratory Infection** guidance documents have been **published** and are available on the HSE-Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website:

- [National Guidance for Acute Respiratory Infection \(ARI\) Testing in Healthcare, Residential Care and Other Congregate Settings](#)
- [Guidance on the Use of Antiviral Agents for the Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza](#)
- [Guidelines on the Management of Pregnant and Postpartum Women with Suspected Influenza](#)

Algorithms:

- [Guidance on testing for Acute Respiratory Infection \(ARI\) in Residential Care Facilities \(RCF\)](#)
- [Management of adults and children presenting with symptoms of acute respiratory infections \(ARI\) at Primary Care Facilities when influenza is circulating](#)
- [Post Exposure Chemoprophylaxis for Influenza](#)

N.B. All previous versions of these documents are now superseded and considered obsolete. Users are advised to discard any printed copies of earlier versions and ensure they are referencing the current version(s).