



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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Norovirus Specimen Collection Instructions

Stool and/or Vomitus specimens: Diarrhea and vomiting are the predominant symptoms of norovirus infection, with diarrhea being more common among adults and vomiting more common among children. Virus can be present in both stool and vomitus. The following guidelines **must** be followed when collecting, storing, and transporting specimens:

--Timing of collection: Specimen collection for viral testing should begin as soon as the outbreak is reported. Ideally, the stool/vomitus specimens should be collected during the acute phase of the illness (within 48-72 hours after onset) while the stools are still liquid or semi-solid. During this phase, viral shedding is the greatest. In some cases viral shedding can continue up to 2 weeks after resolution of symptoms, but the earlier the collection, the better chance the lab has of finding the virus.

--Number and volume: We require specimens from at least 3 and no more than 10 ill persons, which should be obtained during the acute phase (within 48-72 hours after onset) of their illness. Stool/vomitus specimens (10-50mL) should be placed in tightly capped EMPTY stool or urine sample cups. Cary-Blair media may be dumped out of enteric stool collection cups and those may be used if they are the only collection cups available. **Note:** If enteric stool collection cups are used to collect stool for viral testing and the media is not dumped out, the specimen is considered unsatisfactory and will **not** be tested.

--Storage and transport: Stool/vomitus specimens should be kept refrigerated at 4°C. Do not freeze specimens, as freezing can destroy virus particles. Prior to being shipped, specimen cups **MUST** be individually labeled with the patient's name and collection date, put in a leak-proof bag and sealed. Specimens should be shipped in an appropriately labeled, insulated, waterproof shipping container with freeze pillows. Please make sure to completely fill out a test request form for each specimen and send the forms along with the stool specimens. **DO NOT** put the form inside the leak-proof bag with the specimen, as contamination may occur. You may put the forms together in an envelope inside the shipping container. Send specimens to the laboratory via the courier service. Do not send specimens through the mail.

Please remember to wear gloves when handling stool or vomitus specimens and to wash hands thoroughly when finished.

Please consult your local health department or the SPHL Virology Unit (573-751-0633) prior to collecting specimens. Norovirus testing is performed only as part of an outbreak investigation. Individual samples will NOT be accepted.

More information on norovirus gastroenteritis may be found at the CDC Internet site:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm>

www.dhss.mo.gov

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services protects and promotes quality of life and health for all Missourians by developing and implementing programs and systems that provide: information and education, effective regulation and oversight, quality services, and surveillance of diseases and conditions.