

FAST FACTS: Influenza Testing

Recommended Screen — Influenza Virus A and B PCR (FLUPCR)

- Detects influenza B, seasonal H1 and H3 influenza A viruses, and the 2009 H1N1 (swine) influenza.
- This test will detect and differentiate influenza A from influenza B but it cannot distinguish the individual influenza A virus genotypes. If influenza A genotyping is required, order the FLUGENO test (below).
- Influenza virus is usually detectable when symptoms are present and for 5 days thereafter.
- Specimen of choice is an NP and throat swab where both swabs are placed into the same viral transport medium.
- Alternate specimen is a single throat swab. However, this specimen type will have decreased the sensitivity if parainfluenza viruses and RSV are in the rule out list.
- Other approved specimen types can be found at www.wardelab.com.

Influenza A Genotyping (FLUGENO)

- Used to differentiate 2009 H1N1, seasonal H3, and seasonal H1 influenza viruses for influenza A positive samples.
- Can be useful when contemplating antiviral therapy or when current antiviral therapy is not working.
- Should not be used as a general screening test.

Virus Culture (VC)

- Not recommended for routine testing due to long turnaround times (3–5 day average).
- A negative result will be reported in 10–14 days. Deep respiratory cultures are held for 14 days.

Comprehensive Virus Detection (CVD)

- Consists of PCR screens for the major viruses that circulate at that time of the year and culture when the PCR tests are negative. Testing algorithm is available upon request.
- Provides the fastest turnaround time when the viral etiology is uncertain. PCR turnaround time averages 24 hours from receipt in the laboratory.
- Will detect co-infections.
- More expensive than an individual PCR test.
- Recommended when multiple viruses could be causing the clinical presentation.
- Negative culture takes 10–14 days. Deep respiratory cultures are held for 14 days.

Influenza Serologies

- Serological testing is generally a waste of time except for research or special surveillance purposes.