COLLECTION AND TRANSPORT GUIDELINES FOR SUSPECT NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK SPECIMENS

Noroviruses are one of the leading causes of gastroenteritis in the United States. The OLS now offers RT-PCR testing for the identification of these viruses. Below are guidelines for the collection and transport of specimens.

COLLECTION

OLS can only accept stool specimens for Norovirus testing. Ideally, specimens should be obtained during the acute phase of illness (i.e., within 48–72 hours after onset) while the stools are still liquid or semisolid because the level of viral excretion is greatest then. Specimens should be collected in a clean, preferably sterile container. Urine cups with screw top lids are appropriate. Make sure to write the patient name or other unique identifier on the collection container. OLS offers collection vials to providers if necessary. After stool has been placed in container, place container in zippered plastic bag, preferably with absorbent material. The specimen containing bags should be refrigerated immediately after collection and mailed within two weeks.

NUMBER OF SPECIMENS

It is recommended that at least 3 symptomatic persons be tested for the presence of Norovirus during outbreak investigations. The OLS will not test individual patients. For large outbreaks, please only send one in four (25%) specimens from affected individuals be tested, but no more than 10 specimens per outbreak.

TRANSPORT

At this time, OLS does not offer transport containers. Stool specimen containers should be sent to OLS on refrigerant packs. It is very important to keep the stool cold at all times, but not frozen. Please use insulated mailing containers to ensure that temperatures are maintained. Packages should be mailed via overnight delivery. Make sure all current shipping regulations are followed.

DISCLAIMER

RESEARCH PROCEDURE - The results of this test are obtained by the Office of Laboratory Services with research procedures or research reagents. These results must not be used for diagnosis, treatment, or in the assessment of a patient's health. The kits used for this test are not FDA approved.

REFERENCE

CDC, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report - June 1, 2001 / Vol. 50 / No. RR-9