

Thank you for
your interest in
the **TARRANT**
Viral Watch
program



FACULTY OF | UNIVERSITY OF
MEDICINE | CALGARY
FAMILY MEDICINE

TARRANT
WATCH **VIRAL**

This pamphlet addresses
some of the common
questions new sentinels
have about participation.

If your question is not
answered here, please
don't hesitate to contact
us.

Contact TARRANT

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Tarrant Viral Watch
G012 Health Sciences Centre
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Calgary, AB T2N 4N1

Frequently
Asked
Questions

What does my office do?

Each week:

- Take nasopharyngeal specimens from all patients presenting with Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and send the samples to Alberta ProvLab.
- Record the number of patients with ILI and Lower Respiratory Tract Infections (LRTI) and the total number of patients seen each day of the week on the Weekly Incident Report form.

Why do we need to fill out the total patients seen each week?

We look at the rise and fall of ILI rates by comparing the number of ILI cases to the total number of patients seen. This informs us when the ILI rate is higher than usual. We also compare ILI rates from this season with historical rates from the past decade.

ILI rates are a good measure of respiratory virus circulation.

Do I need to complete the Weekly Incident Report form if I didn't see any ILI or LRTI patients that week?

Yes! We want to know when nothing is happening. The total number of patients seen by TARRANT sentinels each week is necessary to calculate ILI and LRTI rates.

If you are away from your practice, please send us the Weekly Incident Report and indicate on it that you saw no patients that week.

Where do I send the specimens?

If you are located **south** of Red Deer courier to:

Alberta Provincial Lab
3030 Hospital Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 4W4

403.944.1200 phone
403.283.0142 fax

If you are located **north** of Red Deer courier to:

Alberta Provincial Lab
8440-112 Street
Edmonton, AB T6G 2J2

780.407.7121 phone
780.407.8984 fax

Who pays the shipping costs?

You should not have to pay for shipping. TARRANT samples are clinical specimens with diagnostic relevance. They are shipped the same way you ship any other lab specimen. The arrangement of where to ship samples is a contracted service with each former health region, courier company, and laboratory. If you are unsure of how to ship samples to the laboratory, please contact TARRANT.

Do the swabs need to be refrigerated before used?

No, the tubes can be kept at room temperature before they are used. After sampling, it is recommended to keep the samples close to 0°C, either on ice or refrigerated.

How critical is it to get the sample to the lab quickly?

Not critical: the sooner the better, preferably within 24 hours. Virus recovery drops slowly over time; influenza viruses are fairly stable, but RSV is less so. If there is a delay in getting the specimen to the lab, virus stability is greater if the sample is kept close to 0°C, either on ice or refrigerated.

How should I dispose of expired tubes?

The viral medium is simply a saline solution with a low concentration of several antibiotics added to inhibit bacterial growth. Therefore, it is non-infectious and can safely be disposed of in the same way as other antibiotic-containing solutions.

What is the Vaccine Effectiveness Study?

The VE study looks at the effectiveness of the seasonal influenza vaccine. This is a multi-provincial study coordinated by the British Columbia CDC. It starts each season after vaccines are available.

TARRANT sentinels are asked to swab all patients who present with ILI and to complete a special lab requisition form. Sentinels are paid \$10 for every sample that is submitted with the complete requisition form.