

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



FACULTY OF MEDICINE | UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

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

403.220.2750 Phone
403.270.4329 Fax

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www.tarrantviralwatch.ca

**Frequently
Asked
Questions**

Tracking Influenza in Alberta

What does my office do?

Each week you:

- Take nasopharyngeal specimens from two 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
- Fax the Weekly Incident Report form to (403) 270-4329

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 the amount of respiratory viruses circulating.

Do I need to send in the Weekly Incident Report if I didn't see any ILI or LRTI patients during the week?

Yes! 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 St.
Edmonton, AB T6G 2J2

780.407.7121 phone
780.407.8984 fax

Who pays the shipping costs?

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. You should not have to pay for shipping. If you are unsure of how to ship samples to the laboratory, please contact TARRANT.

Do the swabs need to be refrigerated until used?

No, there is no need to keep the tubes refrigerated. They can be kept at room temperature. 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?

During the peak influenza season (November through April) 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 during the study period.

The VE study looks at the effectiveness of the seasonal influenza vaccine.