



## Specimen Collection Guidelines for Institutional Norovirus Outbreaks

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) recommends specimen testing during outbreaks of GI illness. Specimen testing provides valuable information on what pathogens could be causing the outbreak and can help direct infection prevention and control interventions. Our Public Health Laboratory can identify norovirus in stool and vomitus using a PCR-based assay. PDPH must be consulted before clinical specimens are submitted for testing. Several private laboratories in the region may also offer this test; please check with your laboratory to see if they offer this lab test. Please adhere to the following guidelines when submitting specimens for testing at PDPH's Public Health Laboratory:

- Stool or vomit should be collected within 48-72 hours of symptom onset
- The specimen should be put into a dry, clean container (e.g. urine specimen collection cup)
  - The container must be placed in a leak proof bag. Liquid stool obtained during the acute phase of illness will have a higher yield than vomit or semi-formed stool obtained later in the illness.
- Each specimen container must be clearly labeled with:
  - Patient's name
  - Date of Birth
  - Date of collection
  - Specimen source (stool or vomitus)
  - Facility Name
- A separate list of names, including date of specimen collection and date of birth, must also be provided to ensure PDPH staff is able to fill out lab slips for each specimen submitted.
- Specimens can be stored in a working refrigerator (4°C) until ready for pick-up. Specimens should not be frozen.
- Ideally, specimens from at least 5 separate individuals should be obtained during outbreaks. PDPH will accept fewer than five specimens when necessary.
- PDPH can assist with specimen transport to the laboratory. Please call the Acute Communicable Disease Program at 215-685-6742 to arrange for pick up.