

# Clinical Specimens Needed for Outbreak Investigations

## General Public Information

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is investigating a potential outbreak, cluster, case of public health importance. Your specimen is essential to identifying the disease causing your illness and will prevent other people from getting the same disease.

### What is a clinical specimen?

- A clinical specimen is a human specimen, not food or environmental. Food and environmental samples may also be taken during the investigation, but human specimens are the most important.
- Clinical specimens may include, but are not limited to:
  - Stool (poop)
  - Nose swab
  - Throat swab
  - Blood



### Which specimen type should I give?

- Example of specimens may include, but are not limited to:
  - Stool (poop) for stomach illness
  - Throat or nose swabs for respiratory illness
  - Blood for rash illness
- If you suspect a foodborne illness caused by eating outside the home, please collect stool put it in a clean leak-proof container and place the container in a cooler with ice packs. Call the local County Health Department to report the incident and let them know you have a specimen to test.
- For all outbreaks, District Investigators (DI) will contact affected people to request a specimen

### Where do I collect the specimen?

- It depends on the investigation, but a specimen may be collected at:
  - Home
  - School/childcare center
  - Doctor's office
  - County Health Department
- If the specimen is collected at a non-medical site (home, school, or childcare center) place the specimen in a cooler with a frozen ice pack. Call your DI for additional instructions on specimen handling and to arrange for specimen transport or shipment to the state laboratory.



### What do I need to collect the specimen?

- If asked to collect a specimen at home, school, or childcare center, your DI will give you the supplies you need to collect the specimen.

### What if I have questions?

- Call your DI at \_\_\_\_\_ or go to [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/investigators](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/investigators) to contact your local staff or call the Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division at 1-800-338-8374.



Alabama Department of Public Health

Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104

800-338-8374 [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases) 11/01/2017