

## New York State Department of Health

### Collection and Submission of Samples for Viral Encephalitis/Meningitis Testing

The diagnostic facilities of the Wadsworth Center are designed primarily to provide laboratory services for all persons in the state for whom such services are not otherwise available. Please use local laboratory services whenever available.

**HISTORY AND SPECIMEN LABELING** Fill in VIRAL ENCEPHALITIS/MENINGITIS HISTORY form as completely as possible. Each specimen should be labeled with patient name, physician name, and the date and time collected.

**CSF** submitted on patients with a reported current diagnosis of **viral encephalitis** will be tested for a panel of viruses (Adenovirus, WNV, SLE, EEE, Cache Valley and California serogroup viruses, Enterovirus, HSV 1 and 2, VZV, EBV, and CMV) and Enzyme-linked immunoassay (ELISA) for WNV. CSF submitted on patients with a reported current diagnosis of **viral meningitis** will be tested by ELISA for **WNV** only. Collect spinal fluid within seven days of onset. Collect in sterile, labeled container. Freeze immediately at -70°C and then ship on dry ice.

If less than 1.0ml of CSF is submitted, the quantity will not be sufficient to perform both ELISA and PCR testing.

1. CSF on patients with **viral meningitis** will be tested for WNV by ELISA (PCR will not be done since it is less sensitive for WNV.)
2. CSF on patients with viral encephalitis will be tested on the physician's preference below.  
**Please consider the following in determining which test is most appropriate for your patient:**
  - ELISA is more sensitive than PCR for WNV testing and should be considered when there is a stronger suspicion of WNV than other viruses.
  - PCR is less sensitive for WNV, but tests for a wide range of viruses. PCR should be considered if viruses other than WNV are suspected.

**SERUM Acute Sera: 5-10ml in a red-top tube.** Clotted blood should be centrifuged. The sera should be separated from the clot and red cells, and dispensed into another tube for shipping. The sample should be refrigerated or, if it will be sent with CSF, frozen on dry ice.

**Convalescent Sera: 5-10ml in a red-top tube.** Clotted blood should be centrifuged. The sera should be separated from the clot and red cells, and dispensed into another tube for shipping. The sample should be refrigerated and shipped on a commercially available frozen ice pack.

**TISSUE** obtained by autopsy or biopsy may be submitted for encephalitis PCR; do not provide formalin fixed tissue. The type of tissue to be collected depends on the disease. Tissue must be collected as soon as possible after onset of disease or death to be suitable. Collect in sterile, individually labeled container. Freeze immediately at -70°C and then ship on dry ice.

### Shipping of Samples for Viral Encephalitis/Meningitis Testing

It is essential that specimens be sent to the Viral Encephalitis Laboratory at the Wadsworth Center as soon as possible after collection. All original paperwork must be complete and accompany each specimen.

- **It is the shipper's responsibility to ensure that appropriate shipping materials are used. Please contact your carrier for shipping and packaging information. Patient specimens must be shipped as "Diagnostic Specimens."**
- For refrigeration, use commercially available frozen ice packs. Do not use wet ice. For frozen specimens, use dry ice.
- All specimens must be shipped "Priority Overnight" and received within 24 hours via chosen carrier.
- Specimens should ONLY be shipped Sunday - Thursday so that appropriate laboratory personnel can be present to accept and accession specimens Monday - Friday.
- Please contact your carrier for shipping and packaging information.

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**Address for courier shipping:**

Wadsworth Center, NYSDOH  
Viral Encephalitis Laboratory  
5668 State Farm Road (Route 155)  
Slingerlands, NY 12159

**Packages sent through US mail:**

Wadsworth Center, NYS DOH  
Viral Encephalitis Laboratory  
P.O. Box 509  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12201-0509