

Quick Reference for Testing During an Enteric Outbreak

Please consult with Halton Region Public Health each time you suspect an enteric outbreak to confirm testing recommendations and obtain direction on specimen pick up/transport.

Quick Facts

- Residents who are exhibiting signs or symptoms consistent with enteric illness are recommended to be isolated and placed on Contact precautions (and Droplet precautions if exposure to vomitus is anticipated), be medically assessed, and be tested as soon as possible.
- Testing for gastroenteritis is completed using an enteric collection kit supplied by Halton Region Public Health.
- Only collect enteric samples from residents who meet the outbreak case definition.

Specimen Collection Kits

- Halton Region Public Health will provide enteric collection kits when an enteric outbreak is suspected or confirmed.
- Always check the expiration date on vials before using (for bacteriology and parasitology specimens only).
- Remove the specimen collection vial(s) from the biohazard bag.
- Label the specimen container with the patient's first **AND** last name, **AND** date of collection, **AND** one other unique identifier such as the patient's date of birth or Health Card Number. Failure to provide this information may result in rejection or testing delay.
- Specimens that have been in contact with water in the toilet are unacceptable.
- Using the scoop attached to the lid of the vial**, select different areas of the faecal specimen (preferably ones with blood, mucus or pus if present), and transfer to the vial(s) as follows:
 - Virology: THIS IS THE MOST OFTEN REQUESTED TEST FOR ENTERIC OUTBREAKS.**
 - WHITE-capped vial (with no liquid fixative) with a plastic scoop fitted inside the cap.**
 - Add faeces up to the line indicated. Do not overfill.**
 - Replace and tighten cap.**
 - Store in the designated refrigerator.**
 - Bacteriology: GREEN-capped vial with red-coloured transport medium with a plastic spatula fitted inside the cap.
 - Add faeces up to the line indicated. Do not overfill.
 - Mix into transport medium.
 - Replace and tighten cap.
 - Store in the designated refrigerator.
 - Parasitology: YELLOW-capped vial with clear liquid preservative and plastic spatula. (Note: The YELLOW-capped vial should always be accompanied by a WHITE-capped vial.)
 - Add faeces up to the line indicated. Do not overfill.
 - Mix well into the liquid.
 - Replace and tighten cap.
 - Store at room temperature.
- Make sure there is no fecal matter stains on the outside of vial.
- Place stool specimen container(s) in the biohazard bag and seal the bag.
- A maximum of five stool specimens per outbreak can be submitted to Public Health.

Flip the page to see examples of public health stool collection vials





WHITE = VIRAL
(No liquid fixative)

YELLOW =
PARASITOLOGY
(clear liquid fixative)

GREEN =
BACTERIOLOGY
(red liquid fixative)

Call Halton Region Public Health for pick up as soon as possible.

Weekdays 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM 905-825-6000 ext.7341
After hours 905-825-6000 ext. “0” or dial “311” ask for the
On-call Public Health Inspector.

For further information about enteric outbreak specimen collection and testing, refer to the Public Health Ontario Laboratory Index (www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Laboratory-Services/Test-Information-Index).