



Guidance for the timely sharing of influenza viruses/specimens with potential to cause human influenza pandemics

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Objective

The objective of timely sharing of influenza viruses/specimens with potential for causing an influenza pandemic is to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic by:

- Monitoring and better understanding the evolution of influenza viruses and their public health significance, by advanced antigenic and genetic characterization performed by designated WHO Reference Laboratories;
- Selecting and developing prototype pandemic vaccine strains;
- Developing/updating WHO diagnostic reagents and adjusting WHO recommended diagnostic tests;
- Carrying out other investigations of public health importance linked to these viruses.

Selection and shipment of viruses/specimens

The viruses/specimens listed below should be shared with the WHO Global Influenza Programme:

- All viruses that could not be typed/subtyped by the most recently updated WHO diagnostic reagents;
- All viruses from human cases infected by animal influenza and selected viruses from animals in areas affected by animal influenza outbreaks; and
- Newly isolated animal influenza viruses with a record of causing human infection and disease.

Viruses/specimens should be shipped to [WHO Reference Laboratories](#) as a matter of urgency. Shipping should comply with relevant [guidelines for the safe transport of infectious substances and diagnostic specimens](#). Clinical and epidemiological background information on cases should be provided.

Principles for sharing influenza viruses/specimens with the WHO Global Influenza Programme

1. The designated WHO Reference Laboratories will immediately report results of analyses of viruses/specimens to the originating laboratory and to the WHO Global Influenza Programme.
2. The WHO Global Influenza Programme will use the information from the analysis of viruses/specimens to select pandemic vaccine strains, to develop/update WHO diagnostic reagents and to address other global public health needs.
3. The designated WHO Reference Laboratories will seek permission from the originating country/laboratory to co-author and/or publish results obtained from the analyses of relevant viruses/samples.
4. There will be no further distribution of viruses/specimens outside the network of WHO Reference Laboratories without permission from the originating country/laboratory.

