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HEALTH ALERT: ODH Asks Healthcare Providers for Help with Summer Influenza Surveillance 6/24/2026

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Bureau of Infectious Diseases (BID) is seeking support from healthcare providers to strengthen summer influenza viral surveillance. ODH asks that healthcare providers partner with their local health department to increase influenza-positive specimen submissions to the ODH Public Health Laboratory (ODHL) during the summer months. This increased surveillance will continue through Sept. 30, 2026.

Although there is minimal seasonal influenza activity in Ohio at this time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is requesting continued testing of influenza specimens at state public health laboratories to maintain situational awareness and ensure adequate novel influenza surveillance.

Healthcare providers should work with their local health department during the summer months to coordinate submission of specimens which are positive for influenza A or B on RT-PCR or rapid molecular tests to ODHL for confirmatory testing and subtyping. If testing volume is such that submitting all positives is prohibitive, it is recommended that providers prioritize submission of specimens from severely ill patients [e.g., hospitalized, including in intensive care unit (ICU)]. However, if feasible, submitting specimens for surveillance testing of influenza positive emergency department patients and other outpatients is also recommended.

With the beginning of Ohio's agricultural fair season, it is also important to be mindful of potential human infections with swine variant influenza and avian influenza viruses (e.g., H3N2v, H1N1v, H1N2v, H5N1). When animal influenza viruses infect people, they are considered novel influenza A infections, a Class A notifiable condition, and should be reported immediately by telephone to the [local health department](#) where the patient lives.

Novel influenza A should be considered in people with respiratory illness and recent contact with dairy cattle, raw milk, wild birds, poultry, or swine or in those who have recently attended an agricultural fair. Healthcare providers should collect specimens from these individuals promptly and contact their local health department to arrange for specimen submissions to ODHL to be evaluated for suspected novel influenza A infections. Upper respiratory (e.g., nasopharyngeal, nasal, oropharyngeal swabs), conjunctival, and lower respiratory (e.g., bronchoalveolar lavages, sputum, tracheal aspirates) specimens are appropriate specimen types for submission to ODHL. If available, lower respiratory specimens are preferred for testing of patients with lower respiratory illness. Conjunctival swabs should be collected (in addition to respiratory specimens) from patients who present with conjunctivitis and have suspect novel influenza A infection.

All orders for influenza testing at ODHL should be submitted through the [eLIMS portal](#). Each specimen should be entered as a separate submission into the portal. Additionally, please indicate "INFLUENZA SUMMER SURVEILLANCE" in the comments section of the submission. For eLIMS portal access, please call 1-888-634-5227 (1-888-ODH-LABS) or email ODHLabs@odh.ohio.gov for assistance. See ODH's recently updated [Collection and Submission of Influenza Specimens to the Ohio Department of Health \(ODH\) Laboratory](#) for additional details.

Thank you for your partnership in promoting continued influenza surveillance throughout the summer.

If you are receiving this health message via fax, please visit the CCCHD website (http://ccchd.com/?page_id=870) or follow the QR code below to view a digital copy with clickable links. If you wish to receive health alerts electronically in the future, please contact asauter@ccchd.com.

Message Details

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