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Clark County Combined Health District- Health Message
Collection and Submission of Influenza Specimens
May 15, 2023

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Bureau of Infectious Diseases (BID) is asking for assistance from healthcare providers to strengthen summer influenza viral surveillance. Please partner with your local health department to submit influenza-positive specimens to the ODH Laboratory during the summer months for additional testing, including subtyping. This increased surveillance will continue through Sept. 30, 2023.

Although there is minimal influenza activity in Ohio currently, 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.

Please call your local health department to report suspected novel influenza cases and to coordinate specimen submissions from any RT-PCR or rapid molecular tests which are positive for influenza A or B to the ODH Laboratory for confirmatory testing and subtyping.

Novel influenza A should be considered in people with influenza-like illness (ILI) and recent contact with swine or poultry during the summer months. With the beginning of Ohio's agricultural fair season, it is also important to be mindful of potential human infections with swine variant influenza (e.g., H3N2v, H1N1v, H1N2v) and avian influenza viruses. 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 of residence. Please collect specimens from these individuals promptly and contact your local health department to arrange for specimen submissions to the ODH laboratory to evaluate for suspected novel influenza A infections.

Please note that nasopharyngeal (NP) OR oropharyngeal (OP) swabs, bronchoalveolar lavages (BAL) and tracheal aspirates are all appropriate specimen types for submission to the ODH Laboratory.

For each specimen, please include a completed ODH Laboratory **SARS-CoV-2/Influenza Specimen Submission Form** (<https://electroniclabsubmission.odh.ohio.gov/>) with "INFLUENZA SUMMER SURVEILLANCE" written in the comments section. **ODH Collection and Submission of Influenza Specimens** guidelines are attached to this message and can also be referenced in the OPHCS document library (EPI ISSUES\Influenza\Novel Influenza\Swine Influenza Guidance).

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 asaute@ccchd.com.

Message Details

Date: 5/15/2023

Time Sensitivity: Not Urgent

To: Medical offices, Urgent Cares, Clinics, Hospitals, Laboratories and ICPs

Target Audience: Physicians, PA, NP, Nurses, Medical Staff, ICP staff, and Laboratorians

Relevance to Public Health: High Concern



Collection and Submission of Influenza Specimens

When to collect influenza specimens

- Within three days of symptom onset, preferably as soon as possible after onset. Specimens collected up to 10 days after onset of symptoms may be submitted if necessary.

How to collect influenza specimens

Collect one nasopharyngeal (NP) specimen with viral transport media from each patient, using the following methods:

Nasopharyngeal Swab

- Use swabs with a synthetic tip (e.g., polyester or Dacron®) and an aluminum or plastic shaft.
- **Assure that the transport media used for specimen collection is not expired.**
- Insert a dry swab into one nostril straight back (not upwards) and back to the nasopharynx.
- The distance from the patient's nose to the ear gives an estimate of the distance the swab should be inserted.
- Allow swab to remain in place for 15 seconds to absorb secretions.
- Rotate the swab gently 2 to 3 times and withdraw slowly.
- Place the swab in container with viral transport media; break off end of swab so that it fits in container.
 - Types of acceptable transport media are: viral transport media (VTM), universal transport media (UVT), M4, or M5 media.
- Label the container with patient name, patient date of birth, date of collection, and type of specimen. **This information must match the information on the submission form.**
- **Specimens may be refrigerated (4°C) for up to five days before shipping. If specimens cannot be shipped within five days, specimens should be frozen and shipped on dry ice.**

How to submit specimens to the ODH Laboratory

- Call the ODH Bureau of Infectious Diseases at 614-995-5599 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday for approval for specimen submission.
- Complete an electronic copy of the [SARSCoV-2 and Influenza Specimen Submission Form](https://electroniclabsubmission.odh.ohio.gov/) (<https://electroniclabsubmission.odh.ohio.gov/>) for each specimen to be submitted. Please note, all the required fields on the form are marked with an asterisk (*).
- You may select the “uninsured” check box in the insurance information section to turn off the validation on the insurance fields.
- Please be sure to include your fax number.
- Indicate in the comments section why the specimen was submitted.
- Please attempt to complete as many of the clinical question fields as possible; you may indicate “unknown” where appropriate.
- Please ensure at least **two personal identifiers are placed on the specimen itself** and that they match the identifiers on the submission form.
- Place collected specimen (primary media container) and one frozen cold pack in a sealed plastic bag (or other watertight secondary packaging).
- If the specimen is frozen, it is preferable that it is shipped on dry ice (use a shipping container suitable for shipping dry ice).
- Place sealed plastic bag in a rigid third container, such as a fiberboard box.
- **Overnight shipment is preferred for receipt within 24 hours.** Specimens collected on a Friday should be held for shipment until the following Monday. Follow protocols for standard interstate shipment of etiologic agents. All shipments must comply with current DOT/IATA regulations for Category B Biological Substances, as listed above.

- Mail package to the following address:
Ohio Department of Health Laboratory
Attn: Virology
8995 E. Main St., Building # 22
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
- If you have any questions, please call the ODH Bureau of Infectious Diseases at 614-995-5599.
- For situations that need immediate attention, please contact ODH Infectious Disease On-Call (IDOC) at 614-722-7221 per normal procedures. Do not call IDOC to notify ODH of specimen submissions.