

MLS: Laboratory Update #3
Specimen Submission to MDH-PHL: Human Swine Influenza A
Please Review this ENTIRE document for SIGNIFICANT changes
April 27, 2009

****Please forward this to all appropriate personnel within your institution****

This is an update from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Laboratory System (MLS). This message is being sent to MLS laboratory contacts serving Minnesota residents. You are not required to reply to this message.

This is a fluid situation and recommendations and guidance continue to evolve, therefore, please continue to monitor the MLS Updates and the websites listed at the end of this document.

Priority levels for patient specimen testing at MDH-Public Health Laboratory

MDH has developed priority levels for testing patient specimens. These priority levels are assigned by the MDH epidemiologists in consultation with the patient's clinician and are based on the CDC influenza-like illness and suspect case definitions http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/casedef_swineflu.htm and also from specimens from hospitalized patients with an influenza-like illness without an alternative diagnosis.

MDH-Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) will ONLY be accepting primary patient specimens for swine influenza testing if (1) a HIGH PRIORITY has been assigned by an MDH Epidemiologist, (2) the submitting site is part of the Sentinel Physician Surveillance Program, or (3) the specimen is NOT from a suspect case, but has tested positive for influenza A by a rapid test (see below). MDH-PHL is also requesting influenza A isolates from laboratories that perform viral culture on specimens from non-suspect cases. Please do NOT send specimens to MDH-PHL for swine influenza testing unless one of these criteria has been met.

To Consult with MDH Epidemiologists

- If you have a suspect case during business hours (M – F 8 AM – 4:30 PM), call MDH at 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 for consultation.
- If you have a suspect case after business hours, collect laboratory specimens (see below) and call MDH the following business day at 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414.
- Please call MDH anytime when there is a cluster of people with acute respiratory symptoms (with or without travel or contact exposure history) OR when a patient is hospitalized with lower respiratory symptoms.

Should rapid influenza testing be performed on suspect cases?

It is currently unknown how reliably rapid influenza kits detect this novel swine influenza A strain. However, there are reports of patients confirmed to be positive for swine influenza that have tested **negative** by rapid influenza kits. Therefore, if a patient has been deemed a high priority, as described above, please send specimens directly to MDH-PHL.

When to send specimens if influenza A is detected in routine rapid influenza testing:

When a specimen is found to be positive for influenza A when performing routine rapid influenza testing and has not been deemed high priority (as stated above) the specimen should be sent to the MDH-PHL (see "sample type to submit" below). If the specimen is positive for influenza B, you do not need to submit the specimen to MDH unless you are a Sentinel Physician Surveillance site, in which case you should submit all specimens as usual.

What sample types to submit to MDH-PHL

- Preferred primary specimen is both a single throat swab with a single nasopharyngeal swab (dacron/synthetic); other acceptable specimens include: nasopharyngeal swab (dacron/synthetic), or nasal wash or aspirate. Please transport specimens in a transport medium that is appropriate for viral specimens. This information should be available in the swab product inserts.
- Materials from RAPID TEST positive samples: please send an aliquot (1-2 ml) of the original saline suspension if it is processed in saline on the first step. Some kits do not allow for an initial saline suspension, in such cases, your laboratory must request an additional swab(s) to be collected from the patient to be sent. If available, add approximately 1.0 ml of viral transport or maintenance media to the saline suspension. If an additional original specimen is available, that is preferable.
- When influenza A is detected in your laboratory by VIRAL CULTURE, please send the actively growing viral culture tube with 2 ml of viral maintenance media. (review safety guidelines referred to in MLS Update #2)

How to submit a specimen to MDH-PHL

ALL specimens MUST come with a COMPLETE laboratory form

- The MDH Laboratory form can be found at:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/phl/clin/index.html#forms>
- Write project number "493" on the submission form (upper right-hand corner)
- Under "Test Requested" mark "Influenza" and write "swine flu" in the box
- On bottom line "Submitting Laboratory's Comments" please include the rapid influenza test result and kit name
- No lab fee sticker is required
- Use cold packs during transport to keep specimen $\leq 4^{\circ}$ C
- COURIER: Please use your normal courier or commercial carrier for sending specimens to MDH-PHL. If specimen is deemed of the highest priority by MDH Epidemiologists, a representative from the MDH-PHL will contact your laboratory to make emergency specimen transport arrangements.

Even though this is a public health emergency, the MDH laboratory still needs basic information, such as patient name and/or identifier, specimen type, collection date, etc. to expeditiously process specimens. Please remember to properly label each specimen and fill out the form with all available information.

Turn-Around-Times (TAT)

TAT is variable. During this emergency period, specimens will be tested at MDH-PHL based on epidemiology-guided priorities. This testing is for official surveillance and control purposes only and results will be relayed back to the clinician through the MDH Epidemiologists in order of priority. You will not receive a laboratory report. The MDH-PHL laboratory is performing multiple CDC-developed PCR screening tests. Preliminary positives will be sent to CDC for further characterization until further notice. MDH and CDC laboratories are working as quickly as possible to understand and control this outbreak.

Questions

If you have questions regarding specimen collection, please call Susan Fuller (MDH Virology Laboratory Unit Leader) at 651-201-5255 or Paula Snippes at 651-201-5581.

Additional Information

We will continue to update you as information becomes available. Please visit the MLS website at www.health.state.mn.us/mls for continuing updates under "Disease specific information"- "Influenza" – "Human Swine Influenza A".

We recommend that you continue to check the CDC website at: www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/index.htm and the MDH Swine Influenza site at: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/swine/index.html

Thank you for your continued vigilance in this matter.

Paula M. Snippes, MT (ASCP)
Program Advisor, Minnesota Laboratory System
Public Health Laboratory, Minnesota Department of Health
Phone: 651-201-5581
www.health.state.mn.us/mls

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties. It is for official use only. Do not distribute beyond the intended recipient groups as described in the action items of this message.