

MLS Influenza Laboratory Update: MDH 2021-2022 Influenza and Respiratory Virus Surveillance Season and Free Webinar on National Influenza Surveillance Strategies offered by APHL

October 11, 2021

Purpose of this Message: This message serves to inform the healthcare community about MDH surveillance and laboratory testing strategies for the 2021-2022 influenza season, and to alert laboratories to a free webinar regarding national influenza surveillance strategies. Influenza and RSV surveillance season (set by CDC for data collection purposes) began October 1. Our epidemiology partners have shared the attached information with clinicians. A second attachment provides a single page document of the specimen handling and shipping information that could be posted in your laboratory.

Action Items:

- Sign up to contribute to the [Weekly Influenza and Respiratory Activity: Statistics](#) webpage by providing weekly influenza, RSV, and other respiratory virus testing data from your laboratory. Click this link to provide your contact information: [2021-2022 Weekly Influenza and Respiratory Activity Participation Sign Up](#)
 - This voluntary weekly data survey is for **submitters located in Minnesota**.
 - Facilities currently contributing data to the “Summer Season” surveillance do not need to sign up again.
- Review the updated guidance for specimen submission to MDH-PHL for the 2021-2022 influenza surveillance season (see attachments).
 - This messaging is intended for **submitters located in Minnesota**.
- Register for the [APHL Influenza Update, 2021-2022 webinar](#) to learn about influenza testing and surveillance in the context of COVID-19. Continuing education credit available. Audience includes clinical laboratory staff, supervisors, microbiology students and research scientists.
- Please forward this information to all appropriate personnel within your institution and Health System.

Background:

Influenza surveillance in Minnesota includes year-round reporting of hospitalized influenza cases and submission of specimens from hospitalized patients with Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) or suspicion of influenza to the Minnesota Department of Health - Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) for influenza PCR testing. Although surveillance has been ongoing, we are sending this notification as a reminder that

the 2021-2022 influenza season (set by CDC) began on October 1, 2021. If you are not currently doing so, please begin utilizing the procedures described upon receipt of this notification.

Important reminders:

- Influenza specimens must be submitted to MDH-PHL within 3 days of specimen collection. If the specimen will take more than 3 days to get to MDH-PHL, it will need to be stored and shipped frozen.
- Specimens for influenza surveillance can be submitted in viral transport medium, universal transport medium, or saline.
- MDH-PHL is using an assay that will test for influenza (A and B) and SARS-CoV-2.
- Subtyping results will not be reported back to the submitting laboratory individually. Subtyping information will be aggregated and reported to laboratories periodically. Please do not mark subtyping results as pending in your laboratory system.

Included in the attached Update:

1. Specimen Submission to MDH-PHL
2. Testing Performed at MDH-PHL
3. Forms Required for Specimen Submission
4. Rapid Influenza Test Information
5. Influenza Reporting Requirements (Hospitalized Cases, Deaths, Critical Illness, Other)
6. How to Report Cases of Influenza
7. Weekly Influenza Activity Webpage
8. Contact Information

Thank you for your partnership and continued support of respiratory surveillance efforts in Minnesota!

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This is an update from the Minnesota Department of Health – Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) 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.

****Please forward this to all appropriate personnel within your institution and Health System****

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 this message.