



Public Health Department

Jeff Hamm
Health Agency Director

Penny Borenstein, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Contact: Christine Gaiger, SPHN
805-781-5500

PROVIDER ALERT

Influenza Testing and Reporting Recommendations 2014-2015

The official start of the 2014-2015 Influenza season is September 29, 2014. To better understand and respond to flu within our County, a summary of the following diagnostic and testing recommendations from the California Department of Public Health is provided.

Please continue mandatory reporting of all cases of influenza in fatal cases ages 0-64. Voluntary reporting of all cases of influenza ages 0-64 requiring intensive care is encouraged.

Be aware that a recent CDC study found that rapid flu tests have limited ability to detect variant influenza A viruses. Lab testing utilizing reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) is the preferred testing method when there is a strong clinical suspicion of flu, even if the rapid test is negative. The SLO County Public Health Laboratory (SLO PHL) can do this testing. Please visit the SLO PHL website at www.sloPublicHealth.org/lab for more information.

Upper respiratory samples suitable for RT-PCR testing include: nasal swabs, nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs, throat swabs, nasal aspirate, nasal washes, NP wash, and NP aspirate. For hospitalized patients, lower respiratory tract samples should also be obtained. Suitable samples include bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, tracheal aspirate and lung tissue. Please place Dacron-tipped swabs in 2-3 ml of viral transport media. Cotton or calcium alginate swabs are NOT acceptable for PCR testing. Specimens should be collected within the first 24-72 hours of symptom onset, refrigerated at 4 C, and shipped on ice packs. If samples cannot be submitted within 72 hours, they should be stored at -70 C or below and shipped on dry ice.

All cases of influenza occurring in institutions should be reported immediately to the Public Health Department for follow-up.

For further information on influenza, and a full copy of the CDPH recommendations, see [www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/pages/influenza\(flu\).aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/pages/influenza(flu).aspx)