



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

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Reporting and Testing Recommendations for Influenza Variant

Recently, the Public Health Laboratory received influenza positive samples that appear to be variants of the 2009 H1N1 strain. **In order to understand if a new variant of influenza is circulating, we are urging medical providers to test for influenza in patients presenting with influenza-like illness, and forward the samples to the Public Health Laboratory.**

Please note the following recommendations regarding reporting and testing. Timely adherence to diagnostic testing guidelines and reporting requirements enables all of us to better understand and respond to flu in San Luis Obispo County. The following are key diagnostic testing and reporting recommendations from the [California Department of Public Health](#).

Reporting Influenza

- Mandatory: Fatal cases in persons aged 0-64
- Mandatory: Cases occurring in institutions, such as correctional or long-term care facilities
- Voluntary (strongly encouraged): Cases requiring intensive care in persons aged 0-64
- Reporting methods: CalREDIE, or fax [Severe Influenza Case History Form](#) to 805-781-5543, or speak with communicable disease nurse at 805-781-5500.

Influenza Surveillance

The Public Health Laboratory is soliciting the submission of specimens (nasopharyngeal swab in M4 Viral transport medium; Influenza RT-PCR, Test # 50000) for recent influenza virus infection surveillance **free of charge**.

New: Order Test # 50010 for an Influenza RT-PCR with reflex for a Respiratory PCR Panel (Test # 6310, **separate charge**) in the event of a negative influenza result.

Public Health Department

2191 Johnson Avenue | San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 | (P) 805-781-5500 | (F) 805-781-5543

www.slopublichealth.org

Please submit:

- Hospitals: Specimens from patients who are hospitalized with influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or placed in an ICU — regardless of rapid test result.
- Community Health Care Providers and Hospital Outpatients: Specimens from patients with ILI and a positive rapid influenza test.

To avoid a fee, note on the lab test requisition:

- Hospitals: That the patient has been admitted and if placed in ICU (For example: Admitted 12/15, Moved to ICU 12/17)
- Outpatients: Rapid test result (For example: rapid a+,b-).

The requested submission of these specimens will allow public health officials to determine if a new variant of the 2009 influenza strain is circulating in our community.

The Public Health Laboratory participates as a member of the California Respiratory Laboratory Network and is capable of detection of new influenza virus strains or variants.

Reminder: Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) can be falsely positive when influenza is less common and falsely negative when influenza is widespread. For hospitalized patients with suspected influenza, the California Department of Public Health recommends prompt empiric therapy with a neuraminidase inhibitor while awaiting results of rRT-PCR testing.

Specimen Collection and Handling

- Upper respiratory samples for routine RT-PCR include: nasal swabs, nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs, throat swabs, nasal aspirate, nasal washes, NP wash, or NP aspirate.
- Lower respiratory tract samples should also be obtained for hospitalized patients. RT-PCR samples include: bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, tracheal aspirate or lung tissue.
- Dacron-tipped swabs placed in 2-3 ml of viral transport media. (Note that cotton or calcium alginate swabs are not acceptable for PCR testing.)
- Specimen collection is best within 24-72 hours of symptom onset.
- Refrigerate at 4°C and ship on ice packs. If unable to submit within 72 hours, store at -70°C or below and ship on dry ice.
- SLO County Public Health Laboratory [influenza specimen collection and transport instructions](#) are also available at www.sloPublicHealth.org/lab.