



September 22, 2009

- *NOTICE: This health alert provides written guidance for health care professionals and others who may need to take action to prevent or control a notifiable condition. It is not intended to provide guidance for the general public.*

NEW Reporting Influenza Infections and Criteria for Testing for 2009 H1N1 Influenza Virus at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories, September 18, 2009

On September 18, 2009 the Department of Health adopted an emergency rule requiring hospitals and healthcare workers to immediately report all patients who are hospitalized or have died with laboratory-confirmed influenza* (regardless of type). This change in reporting is an anticipated response to the confirmed presence of H1N1 in Washington State and Mason County. Local provider offices and hospitals are seeing a marked increase in persons with influenza-like-illness.

In response to this new emergency rule, healthcare workers and hospitals should report the following patients to the local health department:

- 1) Hospitalized patients with laboratory-confirmed* influenza infection,
- 2) Deceased patients with laboratory-confirmed* influenza infection, and
- 3) Deceased patients suspected to have influenza infection.

***Laboratory confirmed includes any of the following: positive rapid influenza test, real-time PCR test, direct or indirect fluorescent antibody test, viral isolate from cell culture.**

The Washington State Public Health Laboratories will continue to perform 2009 H1N1 testing for surveillance purposes. Laboratories are encouraged to send influenza virus isolates from deceased or critically ill patients to PHL regardless of whether or not 2009 H1N1 testing has been performed. Laboratories do not need to submit specimens from patients who test positive for influenza B. **If testing for 2009 H1N1 virus has not been performed, laboratories should submit clinical specimens or viral isolates to PHL from:**

- 1) Deceased or critically ill patients (i.e., ICU admission) suspected to have influenza.
- 2) Hospitalized and deceased patients who have tested positive for influenza.

In addition, healthcare providers have the option to submit specimens from non-hospitalized pregnant women who have tested positive for influenza.

If a patient does not meet the above criteria for testing at PHL, 2009 H1N1 testing can be performed at a commercial laboratory if a healthcare provider feels testing is necessary for patient care. To assist with deciding when testing at PHL is appropriate; please see the algorithm available at: www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/sflu-testalg.pdf Specimens for 2009 H1N1 testing must arrive at PHL within 72 hours of collections with a completed PHL "Virology H1N1 Specimen Submission Form" which clearly indicates the reason for testing. An updated form is available at:

www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/VirH1N1form.pdf.

Specimens that do not meet the above testing criteria and specimens that arrive at PHL without a completed PHL virology form will not be tested. Additional information regarding collecting, storing and shipping specimens for 2009 H1N1 virus at PHL can be found at: www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/speccollecttrans.pdf

Notifiable Conditions Reporting Line 360-427-9670 ext 274