

# Health Update Health Update

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*The Saint. Louis City Department of Health is providing this information to you through the local Health Alert Network (HAN), which is part of a nationwide program to provide rapid mass distribution of information to health providers and others whenever a disease or event threatens the health of our communities. HAN provides for a new level of defense against health threats, including the possibility of bioterrorism.*

Categories of Health Alert Network Messages

**Health Alerts** convey information of the highest level of importance and warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisories** provide important information for a specific incident of situation and may not require immediate action.

**Health Updates** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation and can also provide additional information to revise a previously is Health Alert or Health Advisory. Health Updates are unlikely to require immediate action.



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DATE: April 27, 2009

SUBJECT: Update 1 Swine Influenza

This document provides updated information on swine influenza, including revised recommendations for submission of influenza specimens to the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory (MSPHL) from patients who meet specified criteria.

At the present time, 40 human cases of laboratory-confirmed swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified in the United States. Seven cases have been reported from California, 2 cases from Kansas, 28 cases from New York City, 1 case from Ohio, and 2 cases from Texas. No cases have, to date, been reported from Missouri. As enhanced surveillance efforts continue, both in Missouri and nationally, it is anticipated that significantly more cases will be identified.

Human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have also been identified internationally, particularly in Mexico.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) is conducting enhanced surveillance for possible swine influenza cases in humans. As part of this effort, MSPHL is performing polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for swine influenza virus on nasopharyngeal specimens from patients **who meet the following criteria:**

Person with a febrile influenza-like-illness (ILI)

WHO

a) Traveled to Mexico within 7 days preceding their illness

OR

b) Had contact with person with febrile illness who was in Mexico at some time during the 7 days preceding their illness

OR

c) Had contact within the past 7 days with a person who has confirmed swine influenza

OR

d) Lives in, or in the past 7 days has traveled to, the immediate area of a confirmed swine influenza case

**Before any specimen is sent to MSPHL for testing, DHSS staff must first be consulted by calling 800-392-0272.**

MSPHL can test specimens sent by any medical provider, including those in ambulatory settings, who has a patient that meets the above criteria. **Clinicians in hospital intensive care units and emergency departments are especially encouraged to send specimens from any of their patients meeting these criteria.** Initial test results should be available within 24 hours of the time the specimen is received by MSPHL.

DHSS continues to urge the existing network of Missouri influenza sentinel surveillance providers to submit specimens to MSPHL from outpatients who meet the definition for influenza-like illness, suspect or confirmed influenza, bacterial pneumonia, or febrile lower respiratory illness. For sentinel surveillance providers, consultation with DHSS prior to sending specimens is not required.

Because the virus is not currently believed to be highly pathogenic, specimen collection protocols are the same as for seasonal influenza. Clinicians should obtain a nasopharyngeal swab (using only the supplied Dacron / flocked swab or equivalent) for influenza testing and place it in a refrigerator (not a freezer), and then (following consultation with DHSS as described on the preceding page) send to MSPHL for testing. The Attachment to this Health Update contains detailed instructions for obtaining and submitting seasonal influenza specimens (as well as specimens from persons suspected of being infected with swine influenza virus).

All medical providers should immediately report any observed clusters or outbreaks of febrile influenza-like-illness to the local public health agency (LPHA), or to DHSS at 800-392-0272 (24 hours a day - 7 days a week). All LPHAs are encouraged to perform enhanced, expedited investigations of any such clusters or outbreaks reported in their jurisdictions.

Current information on swine influenza from DHSS is available at:

[http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT\\_Response/SwineFlu09.html](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/SwineFlu09.html).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a number of guidance documents related to swine influenza, including recommendations on infection control and the use of antiviral medications. These documents are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance/>.

Questions should be directed to the LPHA, or to DHSS's Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573/751-6113, or 866-628-9891.

## Attachment

### Missouri State Public Health Laboratory

#### COLLECTION AND SUBMISSION OF SEASONAL INFLUENZA SPECIMENS

Upon receipt of the virus shipping containers, place freeze pillows in freezer and keep frozen until specimens are packaged. Store TPB in a refrigerator (4-8°C) until ready to use.

##### COLLECTION OF SPECIMEN

Swab: Use only the supplied Dacron / flocked swab or equivalent. Collect appropriate specimen for Influenza testing. Do not use wood shafted or cotton swabs for specimen collection. Break off swab tip into a vial of transport medium (TPB). Securely fasten the screw cap on the specimen tube. Keep the specimen cold (4-8°C), pending shipment.

Tryptose Phosphate Broth (TPB) is the virus transport media to be used for Influenza testing and is supplied by the Department of Health. Commercially available viral (not bacterial) transport medium may also be used.

NOTE: After a swab is used, place it into the vial of transport medium and break off the swab tip low enough to allow the cap of the media tube to be tightly secured. If the swab is too long for the cap to fit tightly, the media will leak out and we will not be able to test the specimen. **MAKE SURE ALL SPECIMENS ARE LABELED WITH THE PATIENT'S NAME. ANY SPECIMENS RECEIVED WITHOUT PATIENT NAMES WILL BE DISCARDED WITHOUT TESTING.**

##### Temporary Storage of Specimens for Virus Culture

Specimens should be shipped to the State Laboratory as soon as possible. In order to ensure accuracy, relevance, and validity of testing and reports, specimens that are not received within 7 days of collection will not be tested unless the specimen has been kept at -70° C and shipped on dry ice. During temporary storage, remember that freezing and thawing can be detrimental to virus survival. It is best to keep specimens at refrigerator temperature during temporary storage. At warmer temperatures virus survival is diminished.

##### PACKING FOR SHIPMENT OF SPECIMENS FOR VIRUS CULTURE

Place refrigerant pillows in Styrofoam box. Pillows must be frozen when box is packed for shipment to maintain specimens at proper temperature. Place specimens in safety container provided in Styrofoam container with freezer pillows. Close lid on Styrofoam box and place completed form on top of Styrofoam box. Place Styrofoam box inside cardboard box and tape shut. **DO NOT USE ICE MADE WITH WATER WHEN SHIPPING SPECIMENS FOR TESTING.**

##### Shipment of Specimens for Virus Culture Testing

Determine method of shipment (mail or courier) that will get specimens to the Laboratory in the shortest length of time. If possible, select the method of shipment so that the specimens will not arrive in Jefferson City on Saturday, Sunday, or a holiday. **DO NOT SHIP CLINICAL SPECIMENS BY UPS. PLEASE USE THESE KITS FOR SEASONAL INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE SPECIMENS ONLY.**

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