



STATE OF MARYLAND  
**DHMH**

---

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

Laboratories Administration  
John M. DeBoy, Dr.P.H., Director

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** May 5, 2009 **Lab Update Guidance #2.0**

**TO:** Medical Laboratory Directors  
Health Officers  
Communicable Disease Directors  
Communicable Disease Staff  
Nursing Directors

**FROM:** John M. DeBoy, DrPH  
Director, Laboratories Administration

**RE:** **Revised Laboratory-Based Influenza Testing**

---

Effective today, as part of the Maryland DHMH response to the public health emergency related to the novel H1N1 (swine) variant of influenza A, the DHMH Laboratories Administration (DHMH Lab) will operate under a revised laboratory-based influenza testing program by DHMH EDCP (HO Memo#09-040 May 4, 2009) .

This revised patient and surveillance testing is based on a revised DHMH “Interim Guidance for Specimen Collection for Possible Swine Flu Cases” issued 5/4/09. Under this new guidance (and algorithm: <http://dhmh.state.md.us/labs>) the DHMH Lab will now test specimens **limited to** those **APPROVED BY A LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT** and from:

1. A patient with a fever  $>37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $100^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea) or sepsis-like syndrome **AND** who is:
  - a. Hospitalized;
  - b. A healthcare worker (including EMS);
  - c. Part of a cluster outbreak;
  - d. A child who attends daycare through secondary school; or
  - e. An adult who is an employee/volunteer in a daycare/school setting; or
2. A DHMH-registered sentinel influenza provider or sentinel laboratory.

**Laboratory questions concerning the submission of specimens who meet these criteria may be directed to the DHMH Lab by telephoning 410-767-6152, 8:00-4:30 M-F, and 410-925-3121 after normal working hours.**

**Revised Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Testing Cont. (Page 2 of 2, 5/5/09)**

**Specimen Submission and Transport.** Collect and send  $\geq 1.0$  ml respiratory specimens (nasopharyngeal swabs, throat swabs with nasopharyngeal swabs, and lower respiratory aspirates/washes/sputum if appropriate) in viral transport media only, and package it for refrigerated transport (cold packs) to the DHMH Laboratories. Submitters should follow the specimen submission and transport guidelines used for seasonal influenza specimens.

In rare emergency circumstances where a local health-care employee is not available to serve as courier, an emergency courier pick-up can be coordinated through and with the approval of the DHMH Lab in coordination with DHMH EDCP.

**H1N1 Influenza Virus Biosafety Guidelines for Laboratory Workers.** The CDC biosafety guidelines for laboratory workers processing or performing diagnostic testing on clinical specimens from patients with **suspected** novel H1N1 (swine) influenza virus infection or performing viral isolation can be found at [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines\\_labworkers.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_labworkers.htm).

**Rapid Influenza Tests.** For information on rapid influenza testing guidance, refer to [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/rapid\\_testing.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/rapid_testing.htm).

**Flu Specimen Collection Kits for Possible Swine Flu Cases.** The Laboratories Administration shipped collection kits twice to the local health departments in the last week for use novel H1N1 (swine) influenza A virus infections, and will continue to provide kits to local health departments as supplies allow. Clinicians and health care providers lacking the appropriate specimen collection materials and who need to collect specimens from possible cases meeting the surveillance criteria stated above can obtain flu collection kits from their local health department. Unfortunately, the limited supply of viral transport medium (VTM) precludes the prepositioning of collection kits with other health care providers.

**Weekend Service (May 9 and 10, 2009).** The extent of laboratory services that will be needed and provided this weekend will be evaluated over the next couple days. Updated lab guidance on weekend service will be posted on the DHMH Lab web site ( [www.dhmh.state.md.us/labs](http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/labs) ) on Thursday morning 5/7/09.

**For additional questions or concerns** regarding novel H1N1 (swine) influenza A testing at the DHMH Laboratories, please contact Dr. Robert Myers or Dr. Maria Paz Carlos at 410-767-6152 during normal business hour or the DHMH Laboratory's emergency communication number 410-925-3121 after business hours. **This public health situation continues to evolve and we will provide additional information as it becomes available.**

As always, we appreciate your continued vigilance and cooperation.

Attachments:

Interim Guidance for Specimen Collection for Possible Novel H1N1 Influenza Cases (May 4, 2009)

cc: J. Colmers      K. Black  
D. Blythe        S. Adams  
D. Paulson      R. Stringer  
R. Myers        M. Carlos  
T. Elkin         J. Krick  
A. Romanosky   F. Phillips  
P. Sybinsky     L. Wilson