



Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  
**HEALTH ALERT NETWORK**  
**Update**

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

TO: Nebraska Healthcare Providers & Laboratories

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RE: Summertime Influenza Recommendations

DATE: July 8, 2019

While lab-confirmed influenza decreased in Nebraska in the late spring, it has not completely disappeared as happens in most other years. Our formal seasonal influenza program has concluded but we remain interested in reports of lab-confirmed influenza. Our automated laboratory reporting interfaces continue to capture positive lab tests which on follow-up meet a clinical profile of influenza, and have been confirmed as H1N1 (2009) with PCR testing at the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory. In the past three weeks we identified a cluster of influenza 2009 H1N1 in a large beef processing plant in eastern Nebraska.

Because influenza behaves in a highly unpredictable fashion, we continue to advise the medical community to consider influenza in persons with influenza-like illness (ILI) [defined as fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) plus a cough and/or a sore throat in the absence of a KNOWN cause other than influenza]. Antiviral medication is indicated for those who present with an influenza-like illness and who test positive or patients who show clinical illness compatible with influenza in the presence of an outbreak where other patients have been lab-confirmed. Infection control measures including handwashing, staying home when ill (self-isolation), and covering mouth and nose when coughing are all recommended.

An additional concern surrounding summertime influenza is influenza transmission at agricultural fairs. Pigs can be infected with human, swine and avian origin influenza A viruses. While uncommon, influenza A viruses can spread from pigs to people and from people to pigs. This usually requires close contact between pigs and people. This has happened in different settings, including agricultural fairs. When people are infected with swine origin influenza A viruses, it is termed a “variant” virus infection and denoted with a “v” after the subtype (e.g. H3N2v). Nationwide, in the past 5 years, cases of influenza A H1N1v, H1N2v and H3N2v have been associated with swine exhibitions, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/interim-guidance-variant-flu.htm>. For educational resources, please visit: <https://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/yia/index.html>

Rapid influenza testing should be performed in patients who present with ILI and no other known cause of illness. If the test is positive for influenza A or the patient is highly suspect of influenza but tests negative, a second nasopharyngeal swab/washing should be obtained for PCR at the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL). During the summer months any Nebraska laboratory can send specimens to the NPHL. Please notify your [local public health department](http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Community-Health-and-Performance-) (<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Community-Health-and-Performance->

[Management.aspx](#)) or NE DHHS [Office of Epidemiology \(http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Disease-Reporting.aspx\)](#) of any suspect cases of influenza to arrange for submission of specimens to the NPHL. It is important to collect epidemiologic data on these cases including travel history, exposure to animals, occupation, and vaccination status. To submit an influenza specimen to NPHL for testing at public health expense, specimens must be ordered in [NULIRT \(https://nulirt.nebraskamed.com/login\)](#). For individuals who need access to become users of NULIRT, please visit: <http://www.nphl.org/phlip.cfm> for instructions on how to obtain credentials to become a user of the NULIRT system. Specimen collection guidance is located here: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Flu%20Documents/Flu%20Collection%20Transport.pdf>.

**Category B** (<https://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/agentlist-category.asp>) specimens can be transported via NPHL courier: contact NPHL client services at (866) 290-1406 to make arrangements.

1. Place specimens in bio-hazard bag (with absorbent material) and seal.
2. Shipping boxes provided by NPHL are not required for influenza specimens.
3. Courier should maintain specimen at 2-8C (refrigerated).
4. If using a reference laboratory within Nebraska, Category B may be forwarded by their courier, as typically routine NPHL courier pickups occur at these locations.

For specific clinical laboratory questions please contact NPHL client services or visit the NPHL website at <http://www.nphl.org/>.