

Revised Guidance for Clinicians: Patients with Influenza-like Illness

May 7, 2009

This document is being updated for clinicians within the seventeen-county region serviced by the HDHHS LRN in accordance with local practices and state and CDC interim guidelines.

TESTING FOR SWINE-ORIGIN INFLUENZA A (H1N1) VIRUS

Clinicians should consider testing suspected cases of swine-origin influenza A (H1N1), especially those with severe illness, by obtaining an upper respiratory specimen.

Requirements for swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) testing

Patients tested for swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) **must** meet one of the following two definitions:

1) Hospitalized patients: Requires (A) **and** (B)

A. Documented fever > 100.4° F

B. Cough and/or sore throat OR sepsis-like syndrome

Note: As with seasonal influenza, infants, adults age 65+, and persons with compromised immune systems may have atypical presentations.

2) Outpatient: Requires (A) **and** (B)

A. Patient is 18 years of age or younger

B. Febrile-influenza-like illness, including (i) and (ii)

i. Documented fever > 100.4° F

ii. Cough and/or sore throat

At this time, rapid influenza antigen testing is not recommended as a rule-out test for swine-origin influenza A (H1N1). Per the CDC Interim Guidance on Specimen collection issued on April 29, 2009:

“Rapid influenza antigen test: Also, these tests have unknown sensitivity and specificity to detect human infection with swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) virus in clinical specimens, and have suboptimal sensitivity to detect seasonal influenza viruses. Therefore, a negative rapid test could be a false negative and should not be assumed a final diagnostic test for swine-origin influenza infection.”

Specimen Collection Guidelines

Acceptable specimens for swine flu testing include nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirates, oropharyngeal aspirates or washes, throat swabs, sputum, tracheal aspirates or bronchoalveolar lavage, or viral culture. Swabs can be transported in viral transport media, universal transport media or saline.

Samples should be collected within the first 4 days of illness. **Swabs used for specimen collection should have a Dacron or polyester tip and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Foam or rayon tips on aluminum or plastic shafts are also acceptable. Swabs with calcium alginate or cotton tips and wooden shafts are not acceptable, as these have substances that can interfere with PCR procedure.** Specimens should be put into an approved biohazard bag and placed at 4°C immediately after collection.

Bronchoalveolar lavage is considered to be a high-risk aerosol-generating procedure.

- Infection control precautions should include the use of gloves, gown, goggles or face shield, and a fit-tested respirator with an N-95 or higher filter rating.
- A loose-fitting powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) may be used if fit-testing is not possible (e.g., a healthcare provider who has a beard).

Specimen Storage and Transport

Specimens should be placed at 4°C immediately after collection and should be transported on icepacks to the HDHHS laboratory within 24 hours of collection.

Specimens that are more than 24 hours old should be frozen and transported to the HDHHS laboratory on dry ice within 4 days of collection.

Respiratory specimens suspect for swine flu should be packaged and transported according to guidelines for packaging and transporting dangerous goods.

Specimen Rejection Criteria

Swabs with calcium alginate or cotton tips and wooden shafts
Specimens not transported on ice
Inappropriate specimens not listed above
Specimens accompanied by improperly completed or incomplete test request form
Specimen source not specified on patient test request form
Specimen collection date and time not specified on test request form
Specimens more than **4 days** old

Specimens submitted without a completed laboratory requisition form, Swine Flu (S-OIV) Requisition Form, will be given lowest priority for testing as of **May 11, 2009**.

Specimens submitted without a completed laboratory requisition form, Swine Flu (S-OIV) Requisition Form, will be rejected as of **May 18, 2009**.

Specimen Submission Guidelines

Submitters are required to contact their local health department epidemiologist prior to sending a specimen for swine flu testing.

The HDHHS Virology swine flu patient test request form was revised on April 29, 2009. The revised form, Swine Flu (S-OIV) Requisition Form, is distributed with this guidance and available at www.houstontx.gov/health/Lab/swinefluform.pdf. All fields must be completed prior to sending a specimen. **As of May 11, 2009, any specimens submitted without the Swine Flu (S-OIV) Requisition Form will be given lowest priority for testing. As of May 18, 2009, any specimens submitted without the Swine Flu (S-OIV) Requisition Form will be rejected.**

Providers must fax one copy of the Swine Flu (S-OIV) Requisition Form to their local health department epidemiology program and should include the original completed form with the specimen for submission. See Houston area local health department contact information at the end of this document.

REFERENCES

Laboratory Response Network (LRN) Protocol, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 2006.

Texas Guidance for Clinicians: Patients with Influenza-Like Illness, Texas Department of State Health Services, April 26, 2009.

Interim Guidance on Specimen Collection, Processing, and Testing for Patients with Suspected Swine-Origin Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infection, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 29, 2009.

HOUSTON AREA HEALTH DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION

Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services Telephone: (713) 439-6000 Fax: (713) 439-6306 After Hours (713) 755-5000	Houston Department of Health and Human Services Telephone: (713) 794-9181 - 24 hr # Fax (713) 794-9182
Texas Department of State Health Services Health Service Region 6/5 South Telephone: (713) 767-3000 Fax: (713) 767-3049 After hours: (800) 270-3128	Galveston County Health District Telephone: (409) 938-2322 Fax: (409) 938-2399 After hours: (888) 241-0442
Montgomery County Health Department Telephone: (936) 525-2800 Fax: (936) 539-9272 After hours: (800) 917-8906	Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Telephone: (281) 342-6414 Fax: (281) 342-7371 After hours (281) 434-6494
Brazoria County Health Department Telephone: (979) 864-1166 Fax: (979) 864-1501 After hours: (800) 511-1632	