



OCT. 27, 2010

HEALTH ADVISORY

Department of Health Provides Guidelines for Submitting Specimens for Influenza Testing During the 2010-2011 Flu Season

Influenza surveillance is important in order to understand the types of viruses that are circulating, which has important implications for treatment of influenza. The North Dakota Department of Health is encouraging providers and laboratories to participate in influenza virologic surveillance activities during the 2010-2011 influenza season.

Surveillance specimens from individuals who present with a fever of 100° F or higher, who have a cough or sore throat, and for whom likely causes of illness other than influenza have been ruled out will be accepted by the Division of Laboratory Services for influenza testing. Testing should be limited to a small sample of patients presenting with influenza-like illness regardless of rapid test results. Providers should not submit surveillance specimens on every patient meeting the testing criteria. A maximum of three samples per day will be accepted from each facility. In accordance with general influenza surveillance goals, samples from hospitalized patients with respiratory illnesses and clusters or unusual clinical cases also should be submitted for influenza testing.

Case history, address and symptoms need to be included with every specimen submitted for testing.

As the influenza season progresses, we may need to adjust the number and type of specimens accepted for testing, depending on disease severity or case attack rate.

If you have questions or concerns or to report an influenza case, please feel free to contact the Division of Disease Control at 1.800.472.2180. Reporting also can be done online by going to www.ndflu.com/Reporting/OnLineReporting.aspx. If you have questions about influenza testing, contact the Division of Laboratory Services at 701.328.6272.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.