



MAY 1, 2009

HEALTH ADVISORY

Department of Health Laboratory Extends Hours of Operation

The North Dakota Department of Health Division of Laboratory Services will be extending their hours of operation to receive and process specimens for PCR testing from patients meeting the definition of suspect cases of H1N1 influenza. The state lab will be open seven days a week until further notice.

Arrangements have been made for receipt of specimens through the U.S. Postal Service over the weekends. Courier deliveries and personal deliveries also will be received at the laboratory. On Saturdays and Sundays, specimens must be received in the laboratory by 10:00 a.m. CST to be tested and reported out on the same day. Specimens received after 10:00 a.m. on Saturday or Sunday will be reported the following day.

People exhibiting symptoms such as a fever higher than 100.4 F *and* runny nose or nasal congestion, sore throat, cough and other influenza-like symptoms *and* have had close contact with a person who is a confirmed case of H1N1 influenza *or* travelled to or resides in a community in the U.S. or internationally with one or more confirmed cases within seven days should be tested for H1N1 influenza.

Additionally, the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Disease Control is recommending that hospitalized patients with the above symptoms and no other diagnostic explanation should be tested regardless of history of exposure to a confirmed case or travel to a community with confirmed cases.

Questions about specimen collection and shipment can be addressed by calling the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Laboratory Services at 701.328.6272. Any patients meeting the above risk factors should be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health by calling 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180.

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.