



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

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Reporting and Testing Recommendations for 2017-2018 Influenza Season

As the 2017-2018 influenza season approaches, please note the following updates and recommendations regarding reporting and testing. Timely adherence to diagnostic testing guidelines and reporting requirements enables all of us to better understand and respond to flu in San Luis Obispo county. The following are key diagnostic testing and reporting recommendations from the [California Department of Public Health](#) for the 2017-2018 influenza season.

Reporting Influenza

- Mandatory: Fatal cases in persons aged 0-64
- Mandatory: Cases occurring in institutions, such as correctional or long-term care facilities
- Voluntary (strongly encouraged): Cases requiring intensive care in persons aged 0-64
- Reporting methods: CalREDIE, or fax [Severe Influenza Case History Form](#) to 805-781-5543, or speak with communicable disease nurse at 805-781-5500.

Influenza Surveillance

The SLO Public Health Laboratory is soliciting the submission of specimens (naso-pharyngeal swab in M4 Viral transport medium; Influenza RT-PCR, Test # 50000) for seasonal influenza virus surveillance **free of charge**.

New: Order Test # 50010 for an Influenza RT-PCR with reflex for a Respiratory PCR Panel (Test # 6310, **separate charge**) in the event of a negative influenza result.

Please submit:

- Hospitals: Specimens from patients who are hospitalized with influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or placed in an ICU — regardless of rapid test result.
- Community Health Care Providers (and hospital out-patients): Specimens from patients with ILI and a positive rapid influenza test.

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2191 Johnson Avenue | San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 | (P) 805-781-5500 | (F) 805-781-5543

www.slopublichealth.org

To avoid a fee, note on the lab test requisition:

- Hospitals: That the patient has been admitted and if placed in ICU (For example: Admitted 12/15, Moved to ICU 12/17)
- Out-patients: Rapid test result (For example: rapid a+,b-).

The requested submission of these specimens will allow public health officials to determine the starting point and the relative frequency of influenza transmission, and to provide guidance to the medical community regarding the efficacy of antiviral therapy. Influenza virus activity is currently at a low level as it has been for the summer months.

The SLO Public Health Laboratory participates as a member of the California Respiratory Laboratory Network and is capable of detection of new influenza virus strains or variants as well as the H5N1 strain and the H7N9 strain that has circulated in China.

Reminder: Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) can be falsely positive when influenza is less common and falsely negative when influenza is widespread. For hospitalized patients with suspected influenza, the California Department of Public Health recommends prompt empiric therapy with a neuraminidase inhibitor while awaiting results of rRT-PCR testing.

Specimen Collection and Handling

- Upper respiratory samples for routine RT-PCR include: nasal swabs, nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs, throat swabs, nasal aspirate, nasal washes, NP wash, or NP aspirate.
- Lower respiratory tract samples should also be obtained for hospitalized patients. RT-PCR samples include: bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, tracheal aspirate or lung tissue.
- Dacron-tipped swabs placed in 2-3 ml of viral transport media. (Note that cotton or calcium alginate swabs are not acceptable for PCR testing.)
- Specimen collection is best within 24-72 hours of symptom onset.
- Refrigerate at 4°C and ship on ice packs. If unable to submit within 72 hours, store at -70°C or below and ship on dry ice.
- SLO County Public Health Laboratory [influenza specimen collection and transport instructions](#) are also available at www.sloPublicHealth.org/lab.

Reminder: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination of All Healthcare Workers in SLO County

As a reminder of the August 21, 2017 letter to all healthcare facilities: Dr. Penny Borenstein, Health Officer for the County of San Luis Obispo, is requiring employers to require of all unvaccinated healthcare workers, that, in addition to signing an influenza vaccine declination statement, a mask be worn while on duty during influenza season. This order is an update to our previous recommendation, is effective August 21, 2017, is ongoing, and applies to each influenza season unless the order is rescinded or modified. Influenza vaccine must be received by the healthcare worker by **November 1, 2017**; after that time, a healthcare worker must have either received the vaccine or signed a declination and be wearing a mask.