



Date: June 9, 2021

DPH 2021-02
Replaces BCD 2018-08

To: Wisconsin Clinicians, Infection Preventionists, Tribal Health Centers, and Local Health Departments
HERC Directors, Coroners/Medical Examiners

From: Ryan Westergaard, MD, PhD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist

Influenza Testing and Variant Influenza A Virus Detection

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE WIDELY

The 2021 city and county fair season in Wisconsin is quickly approaching. During recent summers, swine exhibitions at agricultural fairs and other direct or indirect exposure to swine have been associated with human infections caused by variant influenza A viruses that include A/H3N2v, A/H1N2v, and A/H1N1v. So far this year, five cases of variant influenza A have been detected in humans including two cases in Wisconsin.

Clinicians should consider influenza among patients with acute respiratory illnesses (ARI) who report either direct or indirect exposure to swine. Direct exposure to swine includes showing swine, raising swine, feeding swine, cleaning swine waste, or physically touching swine. Indirect exposure to swine includes visiting a building that houses swine or attending an event where swine are present. Clinicians should also suspect variant influenza in symptomatic patients who have been in close contact with an ill person who had recent swine exposure, or is known to be infected with a variant virus (within 2 meters or approximately 6 feet).

ARI is defined as any two of the following conditions: fever, cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea, or nasal congestion. Patients who present with ARI and have known or suspected exposure to swine within one week prior to illness onset can be tested at no charge by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) with the prior approval of the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH). Courier services are available for shipment of specimens to the WSLH at no charge (see below).

Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) will not reliably detect variant influenza. Consequently, the use of RIDTs to identify variant influenza A is discouraged. Nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal, or nasal swabs should be collected from patients who meet testing criteria, placed into one tube of viral transport media, and sent to the WSLH for influenza PCR testing. Specimens submitted for testing must include a completed WSLH lab requisition form. The form can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.slh.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ReqForm-EnhancedSurv-0514.doc>

To obtain approval for testing or if you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Thomas Haupt, Wisconsin Influenza Surveillance Coordinator, at 608-266-5326, or call the Bureau of Communicable Diseases at 608-267-9003. For after-hours approval, call the 24/7 emergency number at 608-258-0099 and ask for the communicable disease epidemiologist on call.

**Shipment of Surveillance Specimens to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene
via Gold Cross Courier**

Specimen Packaging (WSLH Kit # 18 or equivalent):

- **Triple package as “Biological substance, Category B / UN 3373” if classified as Category B.**
- Securely tape the cap of the specimen container, wrap specimen with absorbent material, place the specimen vial into a biohazard bag, and place the completed requisition form into the outer pocket of the bag.
- Place the bagged specimen and form in the Styrofoam mailer with a frozen kool-pak and cushioning.
- Replace lid on the Styrofoam/cardboard box; close and securely tape the cardboard box shut.
- Attach the WSLH address label to the package:
**Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene
Specimen Receiving, Communicable Disease Division
2601 Agriculture Drive
Madison, WI 53718**
- Attach the “*Biological substance, Category B / UN 3373*” label to the package.
- Attach your *return address* label.
- Include the *name and telephone number* of the person who knows the content of the package (requirement) with the return address.

Specimen Collection & Shipping Supplies:

- Specimen collection and shipping supplies are available at no cost to surveillance sites. Please contact the WSLH Clinical Orders dept. at **800-862-1088** or email HMSpecimenreceivingclinicalordersstaff@slh.wisc.edu to order supplies.

Shipping Arrangements:

- The WSLH has a contract with GOLD CROSS for shipment of specimens to the WSLH, with charges billed to the WSLH. **You are not required to ship via GOLD CROSS unless you wish to have the transport charges billed to the WSLH.**
- Specimens will be picked up during regular working hours, but you must confirm the time with the GOLD CROSS scheduler.
- Specimens will be delivered to the WSLH the following day. **If you must ship on Fridays or on the day before a holiday, please include an extra coolant.**
- All package preparation should be completed before the courier arrives.
- Contact GOLD CROSS directly to arrange for a pick-up.

CALL: 800-990-9668

Website: <http://goldcrosscourier.com/>

Same day delivery may be available for specific high priority specimens. However, **pre-approval from WSLH is necessary.**

NOTE: THIS ACCOUNT IS FOR SURVEILLANCE SPECIMENS OR OTHERS REQUESTED BY WSLH. Funding is NOT available for transport of other samples.