



August 22, 2018

HEALTH ALERT: Influenza

Dear Colleagues,

The attached communication was sent via the Michigan Health Alert Network concerning a cluster of influenza-like illness in attendees at a recent conference in Grand Rapids. Medical Providers are asked to have an increased awareness when treating patients presenting with influenza-like illness with travel history to Grand Rapids during the week of August 12, 2018, and to collect nasopharyngeal swabs for submission to the MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) as explained in the attached document.

For further information please contact Brian Hartl, Supervising Epidemiologist, at brian.hartl@kentcountymi.gov.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me at 616-494-5548.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Heidel, MD, MPH
Medical Director
Ottawa County Department of Health

The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is working with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to investigate a cluster of influenza-like illness in attendees of a national conference that took place in Grand Rapids, MI during the week of August 12, 2018. Those reporting illness indicate onset of influenza-like symptoms between August 16 and August 19. Nearly two-thirds of ill individuals have reported being diagnosed with Type A influenza via rapid test.

To help identify the cause of these infections, health care providers throughout the State of Michigan are encouraged to collect a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab for submission to the MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) on any patient presenting with influenza-like illness with travel history to Grand Rapids during the week of August 12, 2018.

Instructions for Collecting NP swabs are listed below:

Nasopharyngeal Swab Materials

- Sterile Dacron/nylon swab
- Viral transport media tube (should contain 1-3 ML of sterile viral transport medium)

You may order complete kits (swab, viral transport medium, requisition form and mailer) by fax (517-335-9039) from the MDHHS BOL by requesting “Unit 45” or “Flu Kit” on the request form found at: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dch-0568_7396_7.pdf. You may also order swabs or VTM separately on the same form by writing in the “Miscellaneous Requests” section, on page 2.

Procedure

1. Tilt patient’s head back 70 degrees.
2. Insert swab into nostril. (Swab should reach depth equal to distance from nostrils to outer opening of the ear.) Leave swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions.
3. Slowly remove swab while rotating it. (Swab both nostrils with same swab.)
4. Place tip of swab into sterile viral transport media tube and snap/cut off the applicator stick.

Specimen Labeling/Handling

Specimens MUST be properly labeled with patient name, date of birth, and a unique numerical identifier (medical record number, lab specimen number, etc.)

Refrigerate or freeze specimen before shipping. All of these transports must be kept cold after inoculation.

Test Requisition Form

Complete a test requisition, form DCH 0583, found at:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/DCH-0583TEST_REQUEST_7587_7.pdf

All information on the test requisition must match the specimen label exactly.

Use 'NRLCA Flu 201808' as the Outbreak Identifier in Section 6 on Page 2.

Kent County Health Department has obtained a list of Michigan attendees of the conference, and will contact other health departments as those on the list are found to live within their jurisdictions.

Questions may be directed to Brian Hartl, Supervising Epidemiologist, at brian.hartl@kentcountymi.gov.