



Influenza Testing – 24/6/09

We are now performing a rapid Influenza test in our laboratory, with results available the next day. The test is Medicare rebatable.

Specimens required are; one nose swab from each nostril, plus a throat swab, in viral transport medium (green top tubes). If you do not have the specified swabs available, please send your patient/s to one of our collection rooms.

Results will specify whether Influenza B or A has been detected.

Please note: human swine influenza is a type of Influenza A.

Please refer to the recent NSW Health guidelines below, which states doctors may dispense free Tamiflu **without any testing** to patients in the specified risk groups.

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NSW Health Memo Laboratory testing for respiratory viruses: 24 June 2009

In recent days there has been a significant increase in the number of people diagnosed with seasonal influenza (influenza A/H1 (human) and A/H3), as well as an increasing number of persons with the H1N1 influenza 09 (human swine influenza) infection. Community transmission of H1N1 influenza 09 is occurring in some areas of NSW.

The Australian Government announced a new response phase 'PROTECT' on 17 June 2009 and NSW has moved to this phase. The focus in the PROTECT phase is on early treatment of those with moderate or severe illness and consideration of treatment based on clinical judgement for those with mild disease but at risk of severe illness. For details of eligibility for free anti influenza treatment please see

<http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/professionals/gp.asp>

Laboratory testing for influenza is not required for patients to receive anti-influenza medication. Testing should only be performed for patients who require hospital admission, or where a test result could change your clinical management. Testing should not be performed for asymptomatic patients.

If laboratory testing for respiratory infection is required for clinical management of symptomatic patients, then requests should state:

- **'influenza'** if you require testing for seasonal influenza and H1N1 influenza 09
- **'respiratory virus'** if a broader range of respiratory virus testing is required.

Respiratory specimens (one throat and one nasal swab in viral transport medium) should be submitted to your usual pathology service.

Results will be available only through your normal pathology reporting system. The NSW Health result enquiry hotline for verbal H1N1 influenza 09 results is being phased out as we revert to the usual practice for respiratory virus testing.

Dr Kerry Chant

Chief Health Officer and Deputy Director General – Population Health