



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

May 18, 2009

MEDICAL ADVISORY: Suggested Prioritization Schema for Influenza RT-PCR Testing

Dear Hawai'i Healthcare Provider,

The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) continues to identify newly acquired cases of novel (swine-origin) influenza A (H1N1) infection among Hawai'i residents. While some have been associated with recent travel from the mainland United States, more are clearly the result of community transmission.

DOH recognizes the cost burden of current influenza RT-PCR testing. To assist healthcare providers in managing patients during the ongoing novel H1N1 community transmission, we recommend prioritizing the following persons with influenza-like illness (ILI; fever ≥ 100 °F [37.8 °C] AND cough or sore throat) for influenza RT-PCR testing:

- Severely ill and require hospitalization
- Potentially high risk for complications¹
- Exposed to confirmed or probable cases (as determined by DOH) of novel influenza H1N1 in the 7 days before symptom onset
- History of out of state travel in the 7 days before symptom onset
- Work in high risk occupations, e.g. health care workers with direct patient care
- Age <19 years

For all such patients, healthcare providers should notify DOH at the time of the initial patient visit by calling the appropriate number listed below.

Influenza RT-PCR testing remains the only reliable and readily available diagnostic assay for identifying seasonal and novel influenza infections. DOH still recommends utilizing RT-PCR to confirm influenza illness in any patient with ILI when possible, as the accuracy of clinical diagnosis is limited, especially when influenza activity is low. However, the above prioritization schema is provided to facilitate your care of patients in the current situation.

Healthcare providers are reminded that antiviral treatment, whether for seasonal or novel H1N1 influenza should be reserved for those who are severely ill and/or are at high risk for complications and may be used empirically in these individuals pending laboratory confirmation.

¹ Includes those who are age <5 or >64 years; have chronic pulmonary (e.g. asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological (including sickle cell disease), neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic (including diabetes mellitus) disorders; are immunosuppressed, including secondary to medication or HIV; are pregnant; are age <19 years and on chronic aspirin therapy; or are residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

For all patients who fulfill ILI criteria, DOH recommends that they:

- Remain home from work or school for 7 days or 24 hours post resolution of symptoms (i.e., fever), or whichever is longer²
- Wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel frequently
- Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing

If you have questions about or need to report a suspect case that meets the above criteria, please contact DOH at the numbers below:

O‘ahu (Disease Investigation Branch) (808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office (808) 984-8213
Kaua‘i District Health Office..... (808) 241-3563
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo) (808) 933-0912
Big Island District Health Office (Kona)..... (808) 322-4877

After hours on O‘ahu (808) 566-5049
After hours on neighbor islands..... 1(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

We appreciate the assistance and partnership of the medical community in assisting with the community mitigation of novel (swine-origin) influenza A (H1N1) virus in Hawai‘i.

Sincerely,



Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP
State Epidemiologist

² Duration applies regardless of antiviral treatment as there are little and conflicting data to support otherwise; time period may be shortened, however, if proven negative for influenza by RT-PCR or etiology other than influenza laboratory confirmed.