

Provincial Laboratory Services



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Health PEI
One Island Health System

Influenza is Now Localized, Stop/Limit Collecting Viral Swabs; International Shortage Alert

February 21, 2020

This information applies to: *Island MDs, NPs, Administrators (Including private LTC), Nurse Managers / Educators, Dr. Heather Morrison (CPHO), Tara Ferguson (Infection Control Manager) and ELT*

Since the fall, we have tested over 500 Islanders for influenza and RSV with our viral screen, including on-site testing at Prince County Hospital. We are now seeing a Flu positivity rate of greater than 30 percent and this week we reached official “localized” status. As we have asked in previous years, our testing will be curtailed. **There is also a shortage of viral transport swabs internationally, which is another reason to conserve test capacity for where we need it most.** Therefore with your assistance:
Still test:

- a) Admitted or about to be admitted patients for influenza like illness
- b) Patients aged 0-5 presenting to ER and there is concern for RSV
- c) Two residents at Long term care unit with influenza like illness AND prior approval has been obtained from Health PEI infection control for Public LTC during the workweek, or the Chief public health office (CPHO) for private LTC and on the weekend for public LTC. **Only test two residents at one time**
- d) Symptomatic patients in Hemodialysis
- e) Symptomatic patients receiving daily outpatient chemotherapy

Testing will be available for those patients when clearly marked on the requisition:

- a) Pregnant (including immediate post-partum)
- b) Immunocompromised patients (e.g. asplenia, >15mg of daily prednisone, or HIV) **be specific on how testing will change therapy**
- c) Health Care workers who provide hands on care

For all other cases if testing is still thought necessary it will require approval of on or off Island infectious diseases, the Chief public health office (CPHO), or the Medical Microbiologist BEFORE specimen collection due to our viral swab shortage. Moreover, sending outpatient clinic patients to the PCH ER or QEH ER or other ambulatory care for the sole / specific reason of testing is not permitted due to infection control concerns unless there has been MD/NP to MD communication.

Thank you for your support as we aim to provide the right test at the right time.

For more information, contact:

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