

# Provincial Laboratory Services



[src.healthpei.ca/microbiology](http://src.healthpei.ca/microbiology)

**Health PEI**  
One Island Health System

## 2018-19 Influenza Testing Process Change for Clinic Offices during January and February 2019 Dec. 21, 2018

**This information applies to:** All Island Physicians and NPs (and their clinic staff)

**From:** Dr. Greg German Provincial Medical Microbiologist and Infectious Diseases Consultant

I am looking for your support to modify our influenza testing during the peak season in January and February 2019. Last influenza season there was extensive outpatient testing in clinic offices. There were also numerous requests by clinicians to send patients to ambulatory care and ER just for influenza testing when testing should be done in clinic office. This hampered timely testing and increase the exposure risk. We appreciate your support to provide effective use of testing for the right patient at the right time.

For this season in January and February, the laboratory will only process influenza specimens in the community when the REQUEST FORM INDICATES THAT THE PATIENTS is:

- Pregnant, immediately post-partum
- Immunocompromised (asplenia, use of prednisone, and HIV)
- Health care worker
- At risk factors for influenza complications other than above. See AMMI Canada algorithm (Link below) and includes:
  - Chronic heart, lung, liver or renal disease; uncontrolled DM or DM pt on insulin; alcoholism; malignancy; etc.

Exceptions to the above include:

- When it is clearly written on the request form how a positive or negative influenza test will change therapy / patient care and consult Microbiologist is checked (case by case basis)
- When it is ordered or cc'ed by internal medicine, paediatrics, public health or infectious diseases.
- Long-Term Care patients when taken in long term care
- Emergency Room Patients

Secondly, QEH and PCH will not offer ambulatory care support just to provide influenza testing during the peak influenza months. This has been passed at both hospitals infection control committees. Influenza swabbing can be done in the office setting with a procedural/surgical mask (a N95 is no longer required). Viral swabs will be provided (Please order through routine channels). Sample collection guide is also provided below. If you feel your patient requires emergency room attention due to their illness then please send them to the Emergency room as standard practice with appropriate courtesy call. Do not send them just for influenza testing. We will monitor if alternative arrangements or education will be required.

Posted to <https://src.healthpei.ca/microbiology>

Influenza is very much a clinical diagnosis during the peak season (see table) and testing at that time is greater than 50% positive. Treatment with anti-virals (e.g. oseltamivir/Tamiflu®) is sporadic and not currently covered in the community except in long-term care setting. Influenza, testing in the community is generally limited across Canada and the limitations listed above are consistent with our regional reference laboratory.

Please encourage your patients and their family members to receive their annual Influenza vaccine. For treatment and management of community respiratory conditions please see [www.healthpei.ca/src/microbiology](http://www.healthpei.ca/src/microbiology) for guidelines. Additional links are provided on the next page.

Please direct questions to Dr. Greg German regarding testing education / testing exceptions and infection control chairs (Dr. Michael Irvine PCH, and Dr. Paul Seviour QEH) regarding concerns of limiting ambulatory care services. Thank you for your support!

Cc: Dr. Heather Morrison  
Dr. Todd Hatchette  
Dr. Michael Irvine  
Dr. Paul Seviour  
Tara Ferguson  
Dr. Wassim Salamoun  
Dr. Sam Azzam  
Dr. Kristin Mead  
Brian Timmons  
Shane Buchanan  
Sharlene Fennell

## Supplementary Community Influenza Material including Collection Technique:

### Influenza versus URTI (Cold)

| Symptom                                 | Cold                        | Flu   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Fever</b>                            | Rare                        | Common, high (102°F - 104°F or 39°C - 40°C)<br>Starts suddenly, lasts 3 to 4 days<br>Not everyone with the flu gets a fever |
| <b>General aches and pains</b>          | Sometimes, mild             | Common, often severe  |
| <b>Muscle aches</b>                     | Sometimes, usually mild     | Often, can be severe  |
| <b>Feeling tired and weak</b>           | Sometimes, mild             | Common, may last 2 to 3 weeks or more   |
| <b>Fatigue (extreme tiredness)</b>      | Unusual                     | Common, starts early  |
| <b>Sneezing</b>                         | Common                      | Sometimes   |
| <b>Complications</b>                    | Can lead to sinus           | Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, worsen a current chronic respiratory condition, be life-threatening          |
| <b>Chest discomfort and/or coughing</b> | Sometimes, mild to moderate | Common, can become severe   |

\* <https://www.ontario.ca/page/flu-facts>

### How to collect an Influenza Swab in the community:

1. Have the patient blow their nose (to remove extra mucous)
2. Wear gloves, procedural / surgical mask, and eye protection (as appropriate).
3. Open the Universal (viral) transport medium kit. There are two swabs be sure to use the smaller-thinner swab. A neonatal swab/kit is also available from the laboratory for age < 3 months.
4. Measure ½ the distance between the nares to the outer ear this is how far to swab (without resistance).
5. Have the patient tilt the head up slightly. If the patient is congested select the nare that they are able to breathe through insert the swab the specified distance. The angle should be straight into the nose or slightly bent upward (see right). Once you have gone the specified distance twirl once and remove. If you meet resistance consider using the other nares.
6. Place the swab in the transport medium and snap off the extra handle smartly.
7. Screw the cap on tightly. Label the requisition and sample appropriately. Refrigerate if possible.



PEI Influenza Report 2017-2018:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/pei-influenza-summary-2017-2018-season>

Weekly Respiratory Infection Report:

[http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/hpei\\_viralresp.pdf](http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/hpei_viralresp.pdf)

Canada Influenza Report:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance.html>

PEI Antibiotic/ Anti-Viral Guidelines:

[www.healthpei.ca/src/microbiology](http://www.healthpei.ca/src/microbiology)

Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (AMMI) Canada Influenza Guidelines

[https://www.ammi.ca/Content/Guidelines/Flu\\_Algorithm.pdf](https://www.ammi.ca/Content/Guidelines/Flu_Algorithm.pdf)

Posted to <https://src.healthpei.ca/microbiology>