

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019



## Montana Laboratory Sentinel-Influenza Edition

Updates from the MT Laboratory Services Bureau, 800-821-7284, [www.lab.hhs.mt.gov](http://www.lab.hhs.mt.gov)

### Influenza season is back!

Surveillance for the 2019-2020 influenza season officially begins on October 1, 2019. Receiving the first positive influenza specimens in the state is important in determining the circulating strains and prevalence, and the Montana Public Health Laboratory (MTPHL) also shares these specimens with the Centers for Disease Control for further characterization and anti-viral resistance testing. We are already seeing a few positives around the state!

This season we will be conducting influenza surveillance as we did last year. We are asking our clinical laboratory partners that perform molecular testing for influenza to report their total test numbers, and the number of positives, over a secure website. These data will be aggregated and reported in the DPHHS Communicable Disease Update on a weekly basis. Molecular laboratories should be receiving more information about this reporting in the next few days. If you just recently added molecular testing for influenza, please let us know, so we can ensure your data is captured.

In addition to the molecular data, fourteen (14) hospital laboratories have been geographically selected to submit two (2) specimens per week for fee-waived surveillance testing, even if they have been confirmed by molecular methods. This surveillance allows for geographic monitoring of the circulating strains of influenza, as well as further characterization and anti-viral resistance trends in our state.

Five (5) fee-waived tests are also being offered to thirty-three (33) additional clinical laboratories from various geographic locations to be used at their discretion. These fee-waived tests are to be used to confirm the presence of circulating Influenza virus in their patient population, such as confirmation of rapid test positive specimens and confirmation of Influenza-like Illness (ILI). Special surveillance forms have been sent to these designated laboratories to facilitate submission.

In addition to our laboratory surveillance, the DPHHS Communicable Disease Epidemiology (CDEpi) section works with Sentinel providers who report, on a weekly basis, the number of patients seen with ILI. These Sentinel providers are also offered five (5) fee-waived tests to use at their discretion.

Suspected clusters/outbreaks or special circumstances surrounding ILI should be reported to MT DPHHS-CDEpi (406-444-0273) and special arrangements may be made for testing. All requested surveillance testing other than from the designated laboratories and Sentinel providers must have a CDEpi consult before acceptance for testing.

When submitting specimens for testing to the MTPHL, please do not submit specimens for testing that are the residual from rapid testing. Specimens must have been collected into universal transport media and shipped in a cold condition. Also, please use the designated influenza surveillance forms. You should be receiving these forms within the next week. If you do not receive these forms by October 1<sup>st</sup>, please contact MTPHL at 1-800-821-7284

For more information surrounding designated surveillance sites, specimen collection, diagnostic testing, and surveillance testing for Influenza, please visit the MTPHL website at: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/LaboratoryServices/WhatsNew>

For more information about influenza activity in the United States during the influenza season, visit the Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report (FluView): [www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm)