



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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To: All North Carolina Health Care Providers
From: Zack Moore, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist
Subject: 2018- 19 Influenza Season: **Testing Update for NC Clinicians (1 page)**
Date: September 28, 2018

This memo provides information and guidance to NC clinicians regarding testing for flu in North Carolina. As guidance may change during the influenza season, up to date information will be available at www.flu.nc.gov.

TESTING

Rapid influenza diagnostic test (RIDT) sensitivities are approximately 50–70% when compared with viral culture or reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). Therefore, a negative RIDT does NOT rule out infection and should not be used for treatment or infection control decisions during periods when influenza is known to be circulating. Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis>.

Confirmatory influenza testing at the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (SLPH) is primarily intended for virologic surveillance, rather than diagnostic purposes. This testing will focus on the following groups:

1. A sample of patients with influenza-like illness seen at facilities participating in the Influenza-Like Illness Network (ILINet).
2. Patients who die with influenza-like illness but have no laboratory evidence of influenza infection.

Testing at the SLPH can also be considered for other patients if the local health department determines that such testing is necessary for surveillance or to determine which control measures are needed. Examples include outbreaks in institutional settings, patients with recent swine or poultry exposure, and clusters of severe or unusual respiratory illness. **Local Health Department approval is REQUIRED for testing at the State Laboratory of Public Health**, with the exception of specimens submitted from ILINet providers. If testing cannot be performed at the SLPH, it can be requested from commercial or hospital-based laboratories.

Specific guidance regarding specimen collection and transport is available on the “Providers” tab at www.flu.nc.gov.

Health care providers should contact their Local Health Departments or the Communicable Disease Branch epidemiologist on-call number (919-733-3419) for questions about influenza.

Updates with additional guidance will be posted as warranted on www.flu.nc.gov. Updates are also available from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/flu.

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