

DCLS Accelerated Flu A subtype guidance_2025

*On January 16, 2025, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory recommending accelerated influenza A subtyping for hospitalized patients, especially those in intensive care units (ICU). This health advisory comes as a result of continued isolated human cases of avian influenza (H5N1) infections during high levels of seasonal influenza activity. Patient specimens that are positive for influenza A should be subtyped in house or forwarded to DCLS or a commercial laboratory within 24 hours for further subtyping.

I. ACCELERATED INFLUENZA A SUBTYPING – HOSPITALIZED/ICU PATIENTS ONLY

Submit patient specimens for influenza A subtyping when the following is true:

1. In-house influenza test **CAN** subtype seasonal influenza A (A/H1, A/H3) and final patient result is: **“Influenza A positive with no subtype identified/obtained” or “Flu A-unsubtypeable”**

2. In-house influenza test **CANNOT** subtype seasonal influenza A (A/H1, A/H3) and final patient result is: **“Influenza A positive”**

II. SPECIMEN COLLECTION/SUBMISSION *(Specimen collection kits are available, upon request)

- For patients that fit criteria **1 or 2 in Section I**, submit a patient specimen (1 NP swab, nasal wash, or nasal aspirate in VTM or UTM) **within 24 hours** of obtaining influenza A positive results
- Label each VTM/UTM tube with appropriate specimen source (**NOTE: Dry swabs are NOT acceptable**)
- Store patient specimens in a refrigerator and ship each specimen with frozen ice packs so that specimens are received at 2-8°C (**NOTE: Samples will be rejected if received outside of acceptable temperature range**)
- Ship in insulated Category B shipper or hard-walled, sealed DCLS cooler
- Complete the DCLS Test Request Form, to include:
 - Completed patient and submitter information
 - Date and time of specimen collection
 - Specimen source types
 - Symptoms and onset date
 - Tracking ID: **RES989AccFluSub**
 - Additional Information: Name of In-House testing performed (e.g., BioFire, Cepheid, etc.)
 - Test Request (pg. 2): **Influenza detection/subtyping**

NOTE: If results are “Influenza A/un-subtypeable” and a clinician suspects H5N1 or novel influenza infection, contact DCLS (804-335-4617) immediately for consultation. Specimens should not be submitted until consultation is completed.

III. RESULT REPORTING

- Hard copy test results will be sent within 1-2 business days after testing is complete
- Test results indicative of H5N1 or novel influenza will be verbally reported to VDH and the submitter on the same day as testing

Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of General Services
Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services
Richmond, Virginia

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IV. DCLS CONTACT INFORMATION: (for kit requests, technical assistance, and testing coordination)

- DCLS 24/7 Emergency Number: 804-335-4617
- Lead Scientist, Dr. LaToya Griffin-Thomas: 804-385-8057
- Molecular Detection/Characterization Group Manager, Sean Kelly: 804-648-4480, x227
- Sample Support Services Group Manager, Terri Harper: 804-648-4480, x140
- DCLS Kits Department: DCLS_SSSKits@dgs.virginia.gov

V. REFERENCES:

- **DCLS Test Request Form:** https://dgs.virginia.gov/globalassets/document-center/dcls-forms/dcls_test-request-form-16857-4.pdf
- **DCLS HPAI Testing Instructions:** <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcapcglclefindmkaj/https://dgs.virginia.gov/globalassets/business-units/dcls/documents/hot-topic-and-updates/2024-hpai-testing-instructions-55328-1.pdf>

VI. DCLS INFLUENZA TESTING SUMMARY:

Public Health Activity	Testing Purposes	Specimen Type	Transport Media	Batch or Individual Submission?	Advanced Notification Required?
Sentinel Influenza Surveillance	Surveillance	NP swab, NP wash or aspirate	VTM, UTM	Batch (use facility Submission Form)	No
Accelerated Flu A Subtyping (hospitalized/ICU patients)	Diagnostic*	NP swab, NP wash or aspirate	VTM, UTM	Individual	No
Suspected H5N1/novel Flu	Diagnostic*	NP swab, conjunctival swab	VTM	Individual	Yes (VDH approval required)
Flu A un-subtypeable (not hospitalized)	Diagnostic*	NP swab, NP wash or aspirate	VTM, UTM	Individual	Highly Recommended

* Samples for diagnostic testing received outside of the acceptable temperature range (2-8°C) will be rejected for testing.