



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Influenza)
Guidance for Coroners
October 26, 2009**

General Information

The ongoing pandemic caused by novel H1N1 influenza A virus continues to expand in Kentucky, in the United States, and internationally. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) expect that more cases, hospitalizations, and more deaths from this pandemic will occur over the coming weeks to months.

Signs and Symptoms of Novel H1N1 Influenza

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting and diarrhea in some patients
- Severe illness can cause:
 - Shortness of breath
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Confusion
 - Severe vomiting

Groups At High-Risk for Severe Illness

- Persons less than 5 years old, especially less than 2 years old
- Persons 65 years old or greater
- Persons with certain chronic or immunosuppressed conditions such as:
 - Cancer
 - Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
 - Chronic lung disease [including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)]
 - Diabetes
 - Heart disease
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Neurological disorders (including nervous system, brain or spinal cord)
 - Neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)
 - Weakened immune systems (AIDS and treatment for autoimmune diseases)
- Pregnant women
- Persons less than 19 years old on long-term aspirin therapy



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Influenza)
Guidance for Coroners
October 26, 2009**

Guidelines for Death Investigations

- When investigating Sudden Unexpected Death, consider the decedent's recent medical history, his/her risk factors, and the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza.
- There are two acceptable methods for diagnosing novel H1N1 post-mortem:
 - ideally, collection of respiratory tissue specimens via autopsy, **OR**
 - collection of a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab (see instructions below)
- If novel H1N1 influenza is suspected as a cause of death, check to see if the decedent had an NP swab collected pre-mortem. This information can be gathered from the decedent's physician or a hospital or urgent treatment center if s/he sought medical treatment prior to death.
- Contact the Medical Examiner in your jurisdiction and discuss the case with him/her. It is suggested that a death not be ruled as H1N1-related unless there is positive laboratory confirmation.
- Notify the local health department.
- The Medical Examiner's Office will work with the KDPH Division of Laboratory Services (DLS) to coordinate laboratory testing of tissue specimens.
- If the death is a coroner's case as defined by KRS 072.025, KDPH and the local health department will work with the local coroner's office in cases of suspected novel H1N1 influenza in reaching decisions regarding the release of information to the public.
- KDPH will verify with local health officials that the treating physician and/or family members have been notified of any test results prior to their release to the Centers for Disease Control and the family has been notified of the possibility that information may be released to the media. As stated above, this information will be released based on joint decisions between the investigating County Coroner's office, the local health department, and the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

How to Collect a Nasopharyngeal Swab

In order to collect an NP swab, a viral test kit is necessary. Viral test kits may be obtained from your local health department or the Medical Examiner's Office. Use only swabs with a Dacron tip and aluminum or plastic shaft. (DO NOT use swabs that are calcium alginate, cotton, or have wooden shafts.)

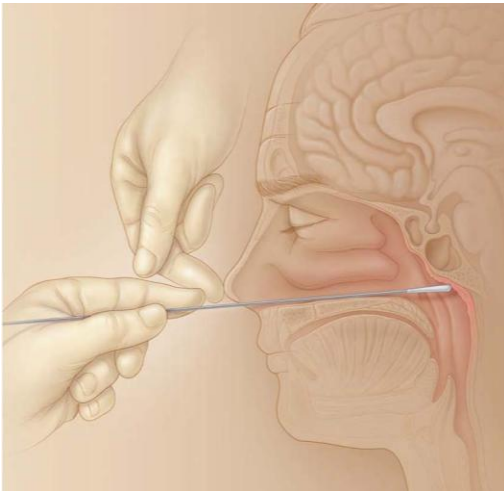
1. Insert the swab into one or both nostrils and press it against the nasal wall as shown in the diagram on the following page.
2. Allow a moment to absorb secretions.
3. Rotate the swab 2 or 3 times and withdraw.
4. Place swab in transport medium.
5. Break off shaft and cap tube.
6. Place tube inside bag with absorbent.
7. Place sample bag on top of frozen freezer blocks and replace Styrofoam lid.
8. Complete Lab Form 275. Clearly write "Post-Mortem" on the lab form.
9. Close box and place appropriate label on top of the box.



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Influenza)
Guidance for Coroners
October 26, 2009**

Diagram of Nasopharyngeal Swab Collection



Post-mortem Care and Personal Protection

- Transport of Deceased Persons
 - Transport of deceased persons does not require any additional precautions when bodies have been secured in a transport bag. Hand hygiene should be performed after completing transport.
 - Standard precautions should be used when handling deceased individuals, and preparing bodies for autopsy or transfer to mortuary services.
 - Standard Precautions apply, and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gowns, gloves, masks, and/or eye protection) is recommended. After PPE is removed, hand hygiene should be performed.

- Family Contact with the Deceased:
 - For deceased persons with suspect novel H1N1 flu, consider limiting contact with the body to close family members.
 - Direct contact with the body is discouraged; however, necessary contact may occur as long as hands are washed immediately with soap and water.