



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**

BRAD LITTLE – GOVERNOR  
DAVE JEPPESEN – DIRECTOR

CHRISTOPHER L. BALL, PH.D., HCLD (ABB) – BUREAU CHIEF  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
Bureau of Laboratories  
2220 Old Penitentiary Road  
Boise, ID 83712  
PHONE 208-334-2235  
FAX 208-334-4765

October 2, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Idaho Influenza Surveillance and Solicitation of Clinical Specimens

Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL) continues to serve as a World Health Organization Influenza Collaborating Laboratory providing influenza surveillance on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the State of Idaho. Surveillance is performed to detect the frequent genetic and antigenic shifts rapidly identify the appearance of novel strains; to detect the emergence of antiviral resistance; and to provide the information needed to formulate vaccine components each year.

IBL is once again asking our partners in the medical community to participate in surveillance by submitting a subset of influenza positive respiratory specimens to us throughout the flu season. IBL will be providing prepaid shippers and sample collection kits to participating laboratories. Each participating laboratory will receive a package that contains 4 pre-addressed, prepaid shippers and 20 sample collection kits. IBL is requesting that laboratories submit up to 5, representative, rapid influenza positive specimens per week to support our influenza surveillance efforts. IBL will replace the prepaid, pre-addressed shippers and collection kits as they are received. At the conclusion of each month, IBL will return an aggregate report showing the subtypes identified from the facility surveillance samples and how they compare with subtypes circulating in Idaho. Unlike past years, IBL will not be providing patient specific information to participating laboratories.

Nasopharyngeal and/or nasal swabs submitted in viral transport media are the specimens of choice; however, a complete list of acceptable specimens can be found on the IBL Influenza Submittal Form.

You can download this from from the IBL website, look under the clinical tab/submittal forms, or directly using this link: <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2781&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS>.

**IBL will continue to provide influenza testing for cluster investigations, outbreak support, and situations where a variant, novel, or emergent influenza virus is suspected. Please contact your [public health district epidemiologist](#) to coordinate this testing.**

Influenza surveillance is free of charge and collection kits can be ordered at on the IBL website or by using this link: <http://keysurvey.com/f/1007823/127c/>. If you would like more information about participating in the Idaho influenza surveillance program, please contact the IBL Influenza testing group at 208-334-0594. To learn more about influenza activity in the state, visit <http://flu.idaho.gov>.

Thank you for your participation!

Robert Voermans  
Microbiology Section Manager  
Idaho Bureau of Laboratories  
[robert.voermans@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:robert.voermans@dhw.idaho.gov)