



County of Erie

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY 313#

January 17, 2014

AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N1) TESTING AVAILABLE AT THE ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY (ECPHL)

**Please distribute to the Healthcare Providers, Infection Control Department,
Emergency Department, Employee Health Service, Infectious Disease Department,
Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Laboratory Service, and all patient care areas.**

SUMMARY

On January 8, 2014, the Public Health Agency of Canada reported the first confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus identified in North America. The patient exhibited symptoms while returning from travel to Beijing, China. Most reports of H5N1 in humans have described severe illness, including fulminant pneumonia leading to respiratory failure, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and death. Other reported H5N1 complications include encephalitis, septic shock, and multi-organ failure. To date, no cases of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses have been reported in the United States.

The Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) is asking clinicians to consider the possibility of avian influenza A (H5N1) virus infection in persons exhibiting symptoms of severe respiratory illness who have appropriate travel or exposure history. This includes persons with recent travel (within 10 days of illness onset) to areas where human cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) virus infection have been detected or where avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses are known to be circulating in animals.¹

If infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus is suspected based on current clinical and exposure criteria, the ECPHL has the capability to test respiratory specimens. Clinicians should obtain a respiratory specimen from these patients, place the swab or aspirate in viral transport medium, and contact the ECDOH Epidemiology Program at (716) 858-7697 for instructions. The respiratory specimens should be collected with appropriate infection control precautions for novel influenza A virus infection.

TESTING CRITERIA

Patient who meet both the clinical and exposure criteria described below should be tested for avian influenza A (H1N1) virus infection.

Clinical Illness Criteria

- i. Patients with new-onset severe acute respiratory illness requiring hospitalization

Exposure Criteria

- i. Patients with recent travel (within 10 days of illness onset) to areas where human cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) virus infection have been detected or where avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses are known to be circulating in animals.¹

OR

- ii. Patients who have had recent close contact (within 10 days of illness onset) with suspected or confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus.

OR

- iii. Persons with an unprotected exposure to avian influenza A (H5N1) virus in a laboratory setting.

¹ For a list of countries where avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses are known to be circulating in animals or where human cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) have become infected, please see http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Animal_Health_in_the_World/docs/pdf/graph_avian_influenza_graphs_HPAI_02_01_2014.pdf and http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/EN_GIP_20131210CumulativeNumberH5N1cases.pdf.

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

ECDOH Epidemiology Program: (716) 858-7697 during normal business hours and (716) 961-7898 after hours

COMPLETE H5N1 ADVISORY

CDC Health Advisory: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00360.asp>

AVIAN INFLUENZA INFORMATION

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm>

INFLUENZA WEBSITES

Erie County: <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=epidemiology-amp-disease-control>

New York State: <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/surveillance/>

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided on the Erie County Department of Health website is not an attempt to practice medicine and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is for informational purposes only. Always seek the advice of your personal physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of the content found on the Erie County Department of Health website or this correspondence.

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=node/59>.