



To: Medical Staff, Nursing Units, and Laboratory Clients

From: Dr. Eric Thompson, M.D., Dr. Robert Littlejohn, M.D., and Dr. Stephen Ingels, M.D.

Subject: COVID-19, Influenza A and B, RSV testing

Date: October 2022

For the 2022-2023 Flu season the NRHS Laboratory is implementing a combined COVID plus Influenza A and B testing protocol in accordance with CDC guidelines. COVID and Influenza tests will only be orderable as a panel, not as individual tests. If an individual test is ordered (on paper for example) it will be converted to an order for the combination panel. (CDC, 2022)

For each COVID/FLU antigen test, **two nasal swabs** must be collected. These two nasal swabs are submitted to the laboratory in separate containers. One is for the antigen test and the other will be used if COVID/FLU PCR confirmation is reflexed. RSV antigen orders will require one nasopharyngeal (NP) swab.

For ED patients and outpatients, the COVID/FLU will be performed as a rapid antigen test, with a turn-around-time (TAT) of approximately 30 minutes. If rapid antigen results are positive for COVID, Flu A, and/or Flu B, the results will be reported and no further testing will be performed. If results for all three viruses are negative then the second swab will be tested using a PCR method, with a TAT of less than 8 hours.

For direct admit patients, the COVID/FLU testing will be performed by PCR, with TAT less than 8 hours.

Results will be reported for SARS-CoV-2, Influenza A, and Influenza B on individual lines in the EMR. If initial tests are negative then the report will state, "PCR results pending".

RSV testing during this season will be performed as a rapid antigen test. This test is intended for children under 6 years old, and has a TAT of approximately 30 minutes. Negative results will not be reflexed to PCR.

Respiratory Panel testing (PCR for approximately 20 viral and bacterial organisms) needs to be conserved due to expense and limited testing capacity. The TAT is approximately 4 hours unless the laboratory's capacity of 8 panels at a time is exceeded. Testing for COVID/FLU and RSV (for children under 6) must be completed before performing the Respiratory Panel.

If you have any questions, please contact the Microbiology Supervisor, Zac Ratzlaff, at 405-307-1146, or a Pathologist, at 405-307-1141.

References

CDC. (2022, February). *CDC: Information for Clinicians on Influenza Virus Testing*. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/index.htm>