

10/27/2009

PERTUSSIS SPECIMENS

Changes in pertussis specimen submission criteria for State DOH Public Health Laboratory

Effective immediately, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Public Health Laboratories (PHL) has changed the submission criteria for pertussis specimens. This is necessary with the increased demand for H1N1 testing. Only samples **pre-approved** by the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) can be sent to DOH PHL for pertussis testing. Without prior approval by the LHJ, samples may be rejected or their testing delayed. Testing for pertussis (PCR and culture) is also available through numerous commercial laboratories.

The criteria we will use for approving a specimen for pertussis testing at DOH PHL are based on the public health significance of the situation. Thurston County Public Health, in consultation with the DOH Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section, will approve samples for testing at the PHL based on the following criteria:

1. Ill person is a health care worker
2. Ill person was in a health care environment while contagious (e.g. a new mother who was coughing at the time of delivery)
3. Ill person was in a situation while contagious and there are public health concerns that high risk persons have been exposed (e.g. the ill person works in the infant room in a daycare, or the ill person teaches prenatal classes to expectant couples)
4. For pertussis culture only when no other testing option is available.
5. When a pertussis outbreak in the community is suspected, the LHJ may approve testing of specimens from a few persons who do not meet the above criteria in order to confirm pertussis as the cause of the outbreak. However, once a pertussis outbreak is confirmed, testing of additional persons associated with the outbreak should be done through a commercial laboratory, unless they meet the criteria for testing at DOH PHL.

To have the LHJ approve testing for pertussis through DOH PHL, please contact Thurston County at 360-867-2535 or 360-867-2533 during usual working hours. For proper specimen collection guidelines, please review page 8 under Diagnosis and Laboratory Services at www.doh.wa.gov/notify/guidelines/pdf/pertussis.pdf

Report all notifiable conditions to the Thurston County Public Health Department 24 hour recorded line at 360-786-5470. If you need to speak with someone during business hours please call 360-867-2533. If it is after hours and you need to reach the Health Officer call 911 and ask them to contact the Health Officer.

H1N1 Recorded Information Line 360-709-3080

H1N1 Info: www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/personalhealth/influenza/swineflu.html

Thank you for keeping our community safe.