

Subject: 2022-2023 Influenza and COVID-19 Testing Guidance

Dear VUMC Clinicians:

Influenza season 2021-2022 is ongoing. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, it is difficult to predict upcoming influenza activity and it is anticipated that these viruses will co-circulate in the upcoming season. Seasonal influenza continues to circulate in our region and SARS-COV-2 activity remains high.

Current data on influenza and COVID-19 rates is available from the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm#ORIAM>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Testing for Influenza and COVID-19

In the Fall of 2022, influenza and COVID-19 testing will include the following options:

Test	Test locations	Use
Influenza + COVID – 19 PCR (Liat)	Select high-throughput clinics	Rule in and rule out influenza or COVID-19
Influenza antigen (Sofia)	Select clinics	Rule in influenza
Influenza + COVID-19 PCR (Roche 6800)	Vanderbilt Medical Laboratories (Time to results, 24 hr)	Rule in and rule out influenza and COVID-19

Providers must be aware that the rapid point of care influenza antigen test (i.e., Sofia) is hampered by a sensitivity of <60% for detection of influenza. A negative Sofia test result should not be used to rule-out influenza infection or determine need for influenza treatment, due to this limited sensitivity.

COVID-19 antigen tests are not used at VUMC for patient care, due to poor sensitivity. These should not be used to rule out COVID-19 infection.

In cases of high clinical probability, initial treatment decisions should be based on clinical assessment in conjunction with point of care or laboratory testing. No single test is 100% accurate to diagnose influenza or COVID-19.

Point of care or home-based antigen tests should not be used as the sole diagnostic method for the following populations. PCR tests should be performed, either by Liat if available, or by sending a specimen to the central laboratory:

- High-risk patients, including immunocompromised persons, who present with influenza-like illness, pneumonia or nonspecific respiratory illness
- Patients who present with acute onset of respiratory symptoms and exacerbation of chronic medical conditions (e.g., asthma, COPD, heart failure)
- Symptomatic patients aged 65 years and older who would be considered for Paxlovid or other treatment for COVID-19
- Patients with symptoms that will result in admission to the hospital

References:

(1) Hurt AC, Alexander R, Hibbert J, et al. Performance of six influenza rapid tests in detecting human influenza in clinical specimens. J. Clinical Virology. 2007;39:132-5.

(2) Ginocchio CC, Zhang F, Manji R, et al. Evaluation of multiple test methods for the detection of the novel 2009 Influenza A (H1N1) during the New York City Outbreak. *J. Clinical Virology*. 2009;45:191-5.

(3) Prevention and control of influenza with vaccines: recommendations of the advisory committee on immunization practices (ACIP)—United States, 2012-13 Influenza Season. *MMWR* 61(32);613-8. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6132a3.htm>, accessed October 22, 2012.