

Further Enquiries:

If you have any further enquiries regarding the RCGP PHE influenza swabbing scheme please do not hesitate to contact your GP. Or if further detail is required you can contact the RCGP Research and Surveillance Centre directly:

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RCGP/PHE Influenza Swabbing Scheme



Patient Information Leaflet



Royal College of
General Practitioners
Research & Surveillance Centre

What is the Influenza Swabbing Scheme?

The Influenza swabbing scheme is managed by the RCGP Research and Surveillance Centre. The swabs are processed at the Public Health England lab in Colindale. The main aim of the scheme is to measure the effectiveness of the influenza vaccination. The scheme is also used for surveillance of respiratory viruses throughout the winter.

Why am I being swabbed?

You are being asked for 2 swabs a nasal swab and a throat swab. This is because your GP thinks you may be suffering, or have recently suffered from influenza or a similar respiratory illness.

What happens now?

The samples which you have provided will be based into a pot of viral transport medium, which protects the samples. They will then be sent to the virology reference lab at the Public Health England Colindale to be tested for various respiratory viruses, including Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus.

Will I get the result back?

Yes, your swab result will be reported directly to your GP practice within 1-2 weeks after sending. Your practice should then contact you with your result and enter it into your medical record. If you receive a positive result your practice may receive extra information on the type of influenza virus you have had.

Why am I not being given antiviral medication?

These swabs are not for diagnostic purposes and will therefore not affect how your doctor treats your illness. Your doctor will only prescribe you with antiviral medication if he or she thinks it will be effective at treating your illness. If you receive a positive influenza swab result you should not expect to then receive antiviral medication as they are most effective when taken up to two days after the onset of symptoms.

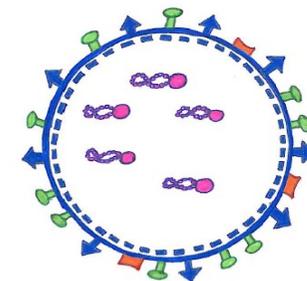
What will be done with my swab result?

Your swab result will not only be communicated to you, but it will be used (anonymously) to monitor the progress of an influenza epidemic, or pandemic, to

give feedback to GPs regarding their diagnosis, to monitor antiviral resistance, to test how effective the influenza vaccine has been that season, and to provide the World Health Organization with appropriate viruses which help them to decide what will constitute the next year's influenza vaccination. So all in all your sample is very important!

Who cares about influenza?

We do! The burden of influenza on the National Health Service during the months of an epidemic can be great. By providing this swab you are enabling the department of health to be prepared for this situation.



Artists impression of an Influenza A virus