

# MLS Laboratory Update: Resuming Powassan Virus Testing for the 2023 Season

APRIL 10, 2023

## Purpose of this Message:

To notify clinical laboratory partners that Powassan virus testing services at the Minnesota Department of Health-Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) will be resuming for the season.

## Action Item:

Inform all affected personnel in your facility that Powassan virus EIA testing will be available at MDH-PHL starting April 15, 2023.

## Background:

With the coming of spring, surveillance for the tick-borne Powassan virus (POW) by EIA will resume starting April 15, 2023. Clinicians should be aware that Powassan viral infection is possible when evaluating a patient with encephalitis once outdoor temperatures are above 40°F. Please provide symptom onset dates when requesting serology testing for Powassan in the *Test and Epidemiology Information* section of the General Infectious Disease Laboratory Submission Form located at [Forms for the Infectious Disease Laboratory](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/forms.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/forms.html>).

In summary:

- MDH will resume testing for Powassan virus starting April 15, 2023
- Testing for West Nile, Jamestown Canyon, and other mosquito-borne viruses is still on hold for 2023. A future MLS will be issued when MDH resumes testing for these viruses.

Acceptable specimen types for POW serological testing include both CSF and serum. Information regarding acceptable specimen types can be found on [The Clinical Guide to Services, from Minnesota's Infectious Disease Laboratory](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/gts/testsa.html#arbo) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/gts/testsa.html#arbo>). **Symptom onset date must be supplied on submission form.**

More information about POW can be found at [Powassan Virus Disease](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/powassan/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/powassan/index.html>).

## Additional Information:

### Specimen Requirements:

- 1 ml of serum (preferred)
- 1 ml CSF (preferably with a paired serum)
- Please ship specimens on cold packs (2-8°C) within 48 hours of collection. If shipping will be delayed, please freeze specimens and ship to MDH frozen.

If travel associated arboviral infections are suspected – such as Zika, dengue, or chikungunya – or if you have additional questions about arboviral disease, please contact MDH Epidemiology at 651-201-5414.

For more information about arboviruses, please see [Vectorborne Diseases \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/vectorborne/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/vectorborne/index.html).

For the most up to date submission form, please see [Forms for the Infectious Disease Laboratory \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/forms.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/forms.html).

### Questions: Please contact:

Scott Cunningham, MS MT(ASCP) SM  
Virology/Immunology Unit Supervisor  
Public Health Laboratory, Minnesota Department of Health  
Phone: 651-201-5032  
[Scott.Cunningham@state.mn.us](mailto:Scott.Cunningham@state.mn.us)

*THIS IS AN UPDATE FROM THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY (MDH-PHL) AND THE MINNESOTA LABORATORY SYSTEM (MLS). THIS MESSAGE IS BEING SENT TO MLS LABORATORY CONTACTS SERVING MINNESOTA RESIDENTS. YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE.*

*\*\*PLEASE FORWARD THIS TO ALL APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL WITHIN YOUR INSTITUTION AND HEALTH SYSTEM\*\**

*THE CONTENT OF THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL AND RESPONSE PARTNERS WHO HAVE A NEED TO KNOW THE INFORMATION TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES. IT IS FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY. DO NOT DISTRIBUTE BEYOND THE INTENDED RECIPIENT GROUPS AS DESCRIBED IN THIS MESSAGE.*

Minnesota Laboratory System  
Minnesota Department of Health, Public Health Laboratory  
601 Robert St. N, St. Paul, MN 55164-0899  
651-201-5200  
[health.mnlabsystem@state.mn.us](mailto:health.mnlabsystem@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mls/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/idlab/mls/index.html)

*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5200.*