

Health Advisory: Peak Influenza Activity

Minnesota Department of Health March 17, 2016 12:00 CST

Action Steps:

Local and tribal health departments: Please forward to hospitals, clinics, and pediatricians in your jurisdiction.

Hospitals and clinics: Please distribute to healthcare providers.

Healthcare providers:

- Continue to recommend influenza vaccination to everyone 6 months and older throughout the entire season or until vaccine expires.
- Utilize antivirals for treatment and prophylaxis of patients in your care, especially those at high risk because of age or health condition.
- Promote other prevention strategies: hand washing with soap and water, covering your cough, and staying home when sick.

To date this 2015-2016 season, there have been three influenza associated deaths in children. This highlights the fact that even in a mild influenza season, severe cases and deaths do occur. Additionally, hospitalizations and outbreaks in long-term care facilities and schools are on the rise. Influenza A 2009 H1N1 has been the dominant strain. With this in mind, use these tools to reduce the impact of influenza disease: vaccine, antivirals, infection control, staying home when sick.

Influenza vaccination: Influenza vaccination is recommended for everyone ≥ 6 months of age and older. We expect to continue to see cases of influenza for many weeks. Keep recommending vaccination to anyone who hasn't received it yet, especially for those who are considered high risk for complications from influenza:

- Adults 65 years and older
- Children younger than 5 years old, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks after the end of pregnancy
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives

AND

Persons with the following conditions:

- Asthma
- Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions
- Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
- Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
- Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
- Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
- Morbid obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People younger than 19 years of age on long-term aspirin therapy
- Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)

Some children 6 months through 8 years of age require two doses of influenza vaccine: children who are getting vaccinated for the first time, as well as some who have been vaccinated previously. See the MDH Flu Guide on the [Influenza Vaccine Information for Health Professionals \(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/vaccine/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/vaccine/index.html) website for more details.

Vaccine for the current season is still plentiful and available. If providers need additional influenza vaccine for MnVFC-eligible children, please contact the MnVFC program at 651-201-5522 or health.mnvfc@state.mn.us.

Antiviral medications: Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza, but antiviral drugs can treat influenza illness. CDC recommends prompt treatment with influenza antiviral drugs for patients who are at high risk or who are very sick, **without waiting for confirmatory testing**. Based on clinical judgement, antivirals can also be considered for otherwise healthy patients who are confirmed or suspected to have influenza. Antiviral medications work best when they are started within 2 days of getting sick; however, starting them later can still be helpful, especially if the sick person has a high-risk health condition or is very sick from influenza. Post-exposure prophylaxis with antivirals can be considered in certain situations. Please refer to [CDC's Influenza Antiviral Medications: Summary for Clinicians \(www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm) for more information.

For more information on influenza in Minnesota, please visit mdhflu.com or call the Minnesota Department of Health at 651.201.5414 or 1-877-676-5414.

A copy of this HAN is available in PDF and Word format at www.health.state.mn.us/han/.

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