

Important Health Notice

Information for Healthcare Professionals UPDATE

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This Important Health Notice (IHN) is based on the current information received to date and provides the following:

- Status update
- Information on lab testing protocols for H1N1 flu virus (human swine influenza)
- Information on antiviral use with respect to H1N1 flu virus (human swine influenza)

Status Update:

The World Health Organization (WHO) pandemic threat level remains unchanged at Phase Five.

As of May 2nd, there are 16 lab-confirmed cases of H1N1 flu virus in Ontario. Three are in York, six are in Durham, one is in Peel and six are in Toronto.

All but three of the confirmed cases have a travel history to Mexico. The cases without a travel history to Mexico had close contact with confirmed cases.

All of the cases are mild and are recovering at home.

Lab Testing Protocols for H1N1 Flu Virus

To assist the Ontario Public Health Laboratory (PHL) to carry out rapid testing of samples, all health care providers who submit samples for testing are requested to adhere to the following guidelines:

Highlights:

- The number of Ontario's confirmed cases of H1N1 (human swine flu) is 16
- Guidelines for health care providers for submitting samples to the Ontario Public Health Laboratory (PHL)
- Health care workers are reminded of the appropriate use of antiviral medications

Who should be tested in the ambulatory setting?

- Outpatients who have Influenza Like Illness (ILI) within 7 days of close contact with a person who is a confirmed case of H1N1 (human swine influenza)
- Outpatients who have an ILI within 7 days of travel to Mexico

Who should be tested in the emergency department and hospital setting?

- Patients hospitalized with influenza like illness (ILI)
- Patients in the emergency department who are expected to be admitted with ILI
- Patients in the emergency department who are not expected to be admitted should be tested in accordance with the guidelines for ambulatory settings above.

Note: If the above information is not provided, or does not fulfill the above criteria, specimens will only be tested if capacity is available.

Additional information on laboratory testing is available at the following website:
<http://www.oahpp.ca/publichealthabstracts.php>

Recommended Use of Antivirals

Due to reports of increased demand for antivirals in light of the H1N1 situation, health care providers are requested to follow the following guidelines on the use of antivirals for H1N1 flu virus:

1. Treatment of the following groups with influenza like illness (ILI) with oseltamivir is currently recommended within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms:
 - Fever and acute respiratory symptoms (ILI) or pneumonia **requiring hospitalization** when onset of symptoms was within 7 days of leaving Mexico;
 - Fever and acute respiratory symptoms (ILI) or pneumonia **requiring hospitalization** in a close contact of an ill person who has developed symptoms within 7 days of leaving Mexico;
 - Acute respiratory illness (with or without fever) and **at risk for complicated disease**¹ with onset of symptoms within 7 days of leaving Mexico;
 - ILI and **at risk for complicated disease**¹ in a close contact of an ill person who has developed symptoms within 7 days of leaving Mexico.
2. Patients with severe disease without a travel history to Mexico should be treated according to the 2009 BC-CDC² seasonal influenza recommendations.
3. **Other patients with ILI do not require treatment with antivirals.**

¹ see link for risk groups:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/08vol34/acs-3/index-eng.php>

² see link at:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/health_notices/ihn_042309_bccdc.pdf

Adverse Events Associated with Antiviral Usage

Adverse reactions to use of antiviral drugs should be reported according to guidelines developed by Health Canada using one of the following three methods:

- calling 1-866-234-2345
- online at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/medeffect
- by completed a Canada Vigilance Reporting form which you can send by fax toll-free to 1-866-678-6789.

Comment on the treatment of children and pregnant women

The use of oseltamivir and zanamivir in pregnant women must weigh the potential benefit versus the theoretical risk to the fetus.

The use of oseltamivir in children under the age of 1 year has been studied in a very limited number of children, and data from these studies has not yet been published. Use in this age group must weigh potential benefits versus potential risks. The use of zanamivir in children under the age of 7 is not well studied and it is technically difficult to administer. Consultation with a pediatric infectious disease specialist with knowledge of influenza is strongly advised if treatment of influenza is being considered in children under the age of one year.

For questions on Important Health Notices, please call the Healthcare Providers Hotline toll free, at 1-866-212-2272. Hours of operation of the line are 0800 hours to 2000 hours. Refer to future IHNs for changes to hours of operation.

(original signed by)

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