

# Important Health Notice

June 4, 2009

## Information for Healthcare Professionals UPDATE

Volume 6, Issue 13

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

- Status update
- Revision to laboratory testing recommendations for Ambulatory Care Settings and Emergency Departments
- Hours of operation for the Health Care Provider Hotline

### Status Update:

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

As of June 3, 2009 there were 969 lab-confirmed cases of novel H1N1 Influenza A virus in Ontario. Of these cases, 54 had a travel history to Mexico. Of the remaining 915 cases, 525 acquired the H1N1 flu virus in Ontario, 11 had a travel history to another affected region and 379 cases continue to be investigated. Nearly all H1N1 cases in Ontario are considered mild. There have been few hospitalized cases, most of whom have recovered and have been discharged.

### Direction on Lab Testing:

The significant amount of laboratory testing conducted to date has shown that the 2009 novel H1N1 influenza A virus is the predominant circulating strain of influenza in many communities at this time. In addition, surveillance and clinical

### Highlights:

- **H1N1 influenza A virus is the predominant circulating strain of influenza in many communities at this time**
- **For Ambulatory Care Settings and Emergency Departments, laboratory testing is only required for clinical management of hospitalized cases of ILI or for patients at high risk for complications**

data have shown that the majority of confirmed cases have experienced mild symptoms.

Health care providers in ambulatory care settings and emergency departments should therefore only submit laboratory specimens in cases where lab results are required for clinical management of hospitalized cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) or where patients are at high risk for complications from influenza (e.g., immunocompromised, pregnant, persons under the age of 2 years and over 65 years of age).

Note – Laboratory testing is not recommended to determine if treatment with antivirals is indicated. Treatment decisions should be based on clinical features only.

The following guidance documents have been revised to reflect these recommendations:

- *Clinical Guidelines for Management of Patients with ILI in Ambulatory Care Settings*
- *Clinical Guidelines for Management of Patients with ILI in Emergency Departments*

The updated guidance documents are available on the ministry H1N1 Flu Virus website in the section for Health Care Providers under “Emergency Departments” and “Ambulatory Care Settings” at: [www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/updates/archives/hu\\_09/provider/default.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/updates/archives/hu_09/provider/default.html)

### **Health Care Provider Hotline**

If you are a health care worker and have any questions or concerns on the Important Health Notices and related guidance documents, please call the Health Care Provider Hotline toll-free at 1-866-212-2272\*.

#### Hours of Operation\*\*:

Monday-Friday      0900hrs to 1600hrs  
Saturday-Sunday    CLOSED\*\*

\*This hotline is intended to provide guidance and support to health care workers only and is not a service to provide general information to the public.

\*\*Hours of Operation are subject to change. Please monitor future Important Health Notices for changes.

\*\*On-call services are available for urgent issues, and can be reached through the Health Care Provider Hotline.

*(original signed by)*

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*(original signed by)*

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