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H1N1 (Swine) FLU UPDATE **Friday, September 18, 2009**

Dear Member of the Albany County Community:

Since the spring of this year, the Albany County Department of Health (ACDOH) has been working actively with many public health partners to respond to the novel H1N1 influenza virus (swine flu). At this time, the World Health Organization has declared a Phase 6 global pandemic status of the H1N1 influenza. As we enter the seasonal flu season, these collaborations will become increasingly important as we work to stem the virus' impact.

ACDOH is taking many steps to inform our residents of measures that can and are being taken to prevent illness. We will provide a regular H1N1 Update to inform you of the latest information regarding influenza surveillance, vaccination and prevention. Our website and the local media will also be regularly updated to communicate important information as necessary.

Please share this and upcoming H1N1 Updates with your family, friends and coworkers. The more we work together as a community, the more likely we are to lessen the impact of the H1N1 pandemic.

Flu Surveillance

The ACDOH has continued to see low levels of novel H1N1 influenza cases reported in our county throughout the summer months. Currently, no increase in flu cases has been detected. Pharmacies have reported an increase in the sale of over-the-counter (OTC) flu products during the past week, but there has been no increase in Emergency Department visits for flu or flu-like symptoms. ACDOH is continuing to monitor influenza activity on a daily basis.

Nationally, the novel H1N1 influenza virus continues to be the dominant flu virus circulating at this time. In New York State, two recent outbreaks of novel H1N1 have occurred on college campuses. Cornell University reported over 650 cases among students with one death and Ithaca College has reported a smaller outbreak affecting approximately 60 students. In the general community, novel H1N1 flu virus activity was sporadic in NYS for the previous week.

Flu Vaccination Information

- Getting a flu vaccine is one of the best ways to protect yourself against the flu.
- The “seasonal,” or yearly, flu vaccine is different from the H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine and will not protect you from the H1N1 virus.
- The seasonal flu vaccine is available now and is recommended for all individuals over the age of 6 months. Federal, state and local public health officials encourage you to contact your health care provider to obtain the seasonal flu vaccine.
- The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) just recently approved the H1N1 influenza vaccine for public use. The H1N1 vaccine is being made using the same processes and facilities that are used to make the seasonal influenza vaccines.
- The H1N1 flu vaccine is expected to be ready for certain priority groups by mid October. As more vaccine becomes available, it will be offered more broadly. The national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel of medical and public health experts, have used epidemiological data to identify the priority groups as follows:
 - Pregnant women
 - Caregivers and household contacts for children younger than 6 months of age
 - Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
 - All people from 6 months through 24 years of age
 - Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have chronic health conditions (such as cancer, blood disorders (including sickle cell disease), chronic lung disease (including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), diabetes, heart disease, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders (including nervous system, brain or spinal cord), neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis) and people with weakened immune systems (including people with AIDS or those who are receiving chemotherapy)
 - The New York State Department of Health and local health departments are currently developing H1N1 vaccination plans in collaboration with many community partners including health care providers, pharmacies and others to ensure the most effective administration of the H1N1 vaccine when the vaccine becomes available.
- Health Care Providers can pre-register their practices to receive H1N1 vaccine to be administered to their patients and staff. To do so, please visit the following website: <https://hcsteamwork1.health.state.ny.us/pub>
- Pharmacists can also pre-register to obtain vaccine at the above website.

Public Information:

It is important to remember that we can take many steps to protect ourselves and our families from illness, including the following:

- **Take everyday actions to stay healthy and keep others healthy.**
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, not your hand. Throw the tissue in the trash immediately after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough into your elbow joint.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread very easily that way.
 - Stay home if you get flu-like symptoms (fever of 100 degrees or greater, cough or sore throat) and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. Stay home until your fever has ended for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- The location of seasonal flu clinics and information about H1N1 flu is available on our website: www.albanycounty.com
- The New York State Health Department has an H1N1 flu hotline at 1-800-808-1987 for additional information and to answer questions.
- If you are an Albany County resident and would like additional information about influenza, please call our automated flu information line for updates at 447-4505 or contact our staff at 447-4589 or 447-4648 between 8:30am and 4:30pm.

If you would like to be removed from this list please e-mail BeReady@AlbanyCounty.com and insert "Remove from Weekly Update" in subject line.