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## **2009 H1N1 FLU UPDATE: Tuesday, November 11, 2009**

### **Flu Surveillance - ALERT**

#### **Albany County Flu Surveillance – Key Findings:**

- » The overall level of flu activity in Albany County is currently high and is increased when compared to the previous week.
- » While most Albany County residents with flu are experiencing mild to moderate illness, a number of residents are hospitalized due to more severe illness or complications caused by the flu. The majority of residents hospitalized with flu also have pre-existing underlying medical conditions. As with seasonal influenza, serious illnesses or complications from having the flu are seen during any typical flu season. With the novel H1N1 influenza, illness is much more widespread than during a typical flu season, especially at this time of year. As many more people are becoming ill with H1N1 influenza, the likelihood is increased that more serious illnesses or complications will occur.
- » Although hospitalizations for individuals with severe influenza illness have shown an increase in NYS, given the vast number of individuals who are or have been ill with H1N1 influenza, deaths related to influenza have been a relatively rare occurrence.
- » Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centers continue to report seeing high levels of patients with influenza-like illness. Healthcare providers in Albany County also report continued high levels of visits and phone calls concerning influenza issues.
- » All laboratories (hospital, commercial and private) are reporting positive flu test results. 99% of positive influenza A lab test results that are subtyped continue to be the H1N1 strain.
- » While schools in Albany County continue to see elevated levels of absenteeism due to influenza-like illness, the trend appears to have decreased slightly compared to the previous week.
- » Nationally, the H1N1 influenza virus continues to be widespread in 48 states, including New York State.

### **Flu Vaccination Information**

Although national H1N1 vaccine supplies continue to be limited, small amounts are being released and it is anticipated that greater quantities of vaccine will be available

later this month. At this time, however, healthcare providers in Albany County still have only received small amounts of the H1N1 vaccine that they have ordered. Last week, ACDOH received 1400 doses of H1N1 vaccine and disseminated all 1400 doses to Pediatric, Obstetric and Family Practice providers to be dispensed to high risk patients that fall into the vaccine target groups (see [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination\\_qa\\_pub.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination_qa_pub.htm)).

Residents who are in the target groups should contact their medical providers to obtain information about getting vaccinated.

In addition, ACDOH received additional H1N1 vaccine this week and is planning to hold a public clinic on November 15, 2009 from 10:00am to 7:00pm at the Times Union Center on South Pearl Street in Albany. This clinic will be by appointment only for Albany County residents who are in one of the following priority groups\*:

- Pregnant women,
- Persons who live with or provide care for infants aged <6 months (e.g., parents, siblings, and daycare providers),
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel who have direct contact with patients or infectious material,
- Children aged 6 months - 4 years, and
- Children and adolescents aged 5 -18 years who have medical conditions such as chronic lung (i.e. asthma), heart (except high blood pressure), kidney, liver, blood, or metabolic disorders (i.e. diabetes); nerve and muscle system disorders that affect breathing or that can increase risk for choking (i.e. spinal cord injuries, seizures); immune-suppressed conditions (from medications or HIV), and long-term aspirin therapy that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

**Albany County residents can pre-register for an appointment in one of two ways:**

Online at [www.albanycounty.com/health](http://www.albanycounty.com/health) or by phone at 518-447-4505

Phone hours are on Wednesday – Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Vaccination can only be provided to Albany County residents whose names are on the registration list.

\*The H1N1 vaccine is currently in very limited supply. This is why H1N1 vaccine is initially being made available to these priority groups. The Albany County Department of Health will be planning more H1N1 vaccine clinics for the people of Albany County as more vaccine becomes available in the coming weeks. These clinics will be widely publicized. For more information, go to [www.albanycounty.com/health](http://www.albanycounty.com/health) or call the Albany County Flu Line at 518-447-4505.

The NYSDOH has determined that there will be insufficient supplies of thimerosal-free vaccine available this flu season. It is recommended by county, NYS, and federal health authorities that if thimerosal-free vaccine is not available, pregnant women and children less than 3 years of age should not wait to get immunized. Waiting could allow for exposure to influenza disease and could result in more serious illness and complications. Also note, that the CDC, FDA and NIH have extensively reviewed the published research on thimerosal and found it to be a safe product to use in vaccines.

For information regarding **seasonal** flu vaccine please visit the NYS DOH website for flu vaccine locators and check our website at [www.albanycounty.com/health](http://www.albanycounty.com/health) for more information about flu vaccine availability. Also, when you check with your provider about H1N1 vaccine, inquire about seasonal vaccine as well.

## **Public Information: Stay at home with mild illness**

As noted in the Flu Surveillance section of this update, the 2009 H1N1 influenza (flu) virus is widespread throughout the community and many people are sick with flu-like symptoms. These symptoms may include some or all of the following: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, body aches, chills, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

Fortunately, most people have mild illness which can be managed at home with rest, fluids and fever-reducing medications (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) and they do not require additional medical care. However, some people are at increased risk for developing complications from influenza. People at increased risk should contact their health care provider if they develop symptoms of flu because they may need antiviral medication to help them fight the flu.

People at increased risk include: children 4 years of age and younger (especially those less than 2 years), pregnant women, adults 65 years and older, anyone with an underlying medical condition (such as asthma, lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, neurologic disease, immune deficiency, etc.) and people under 19 years of age taking long-term aspirin therapy.

Local hospital emergency departments and doctor's offices have been overloaded with people complaining of flu-like illness. However, as noted above, most people with the flu can be managed at home or through a phone consultation with their health care provider. It is important that only people that really need medical care go to their doctor's office or the emergency room.

If you have any of the following warning signs you should seek immediate medical attention:

### **In children**

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

### **In adults**

- Fever with a rash
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

As always, if you get sick with flu symptoms and you are concerned about your illness and are unsure what to do, call your health care provider for advice.

If you would like to subscribe to or be removed from this list please e-mail [BeReady@AlbanyCounty.com](mailto:BeReady@AlbanyCounty.com) and insert "Remove from Weekly Update" in subject line.

More resources for more information about seasonal flu and H1N1 flu:

The Albany County Department of Health  
[www.albanycounty.com/health](http://www.albanycounty.com/health)

Call Albany County's 24-hour automated flu hotline at (518) 447-4505

The New York State Department of Health H1N1 flu hotline at 1-800-808-1987

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)