

October 9, 2009

H₁N₁ Influenza A Update

New York Statewide School Health Services Center

From the Centers for Disease Control:

People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications

Most people who get the flu (either seasonal or 2009 H1N1) will have mild illness, will not need medical care or antiviral drugs, and will recover in less than two weeks. Some people, however, are more likely to get flu complications that result in being hospitalized and occasionally result in death. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. The flu can also make chronic health problems worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu, and people with chronic congestive heart failure may have worsening of this condition that is triggered by the flu. The list below includes the groups of people more likely to get flu-related complications if they get sick from influenza.

People at High Risk for Flu Complications:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- People who have:
 - Cancer
 - Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
 - Chronic lung disease [such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)]
 - Diabetes
 - Heart disease
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Neurological disorders (such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, brain or spinal cord injuries, moderate to profound intellectual disability [mental retardation] or developmental delay)
 - Neuromuscular disorders (such as muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)
 - Weakened immune systems (such as people with HIV or AIDS or who are on medications that weaken the immune system)

School Based Flu Clinics in New York State

We continue to wait for guidance and a tool kit from New York State on the vaccination of students in the school setting for the 2009 H1N1 Influenza A. We are aware that if a local Health Department (LDH) wants to work with a school district to establish an immunization clinic in a school or district, there must be a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the district and the LDH mutually agree upon as to how the clinics will be administered.

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2009 H1N1 and Seasonal Flu: What You Should Know About Flu Antiviral Drugs

These questions and many more are answered on the CDC web page at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/antivirals/geninfo.htm>

What antiviral drugs are recommended this flu season?

There are two antiviral drugs recommended by CDC this season. The brand names for these are Tamiflu® and Relenza® (The generic names for these drugs are oseltamivir and zanamivir). Tamiflu® is available as a pill or liquid and Relenza® is a powder that is inhaled.

Who should take antiviral drugs?

It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with flu and have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications. Other people may also be treated with antiviral drugs by their doctor this season. Most healthy people with flu, however, do not need to be treated with antiviral drugs.

Can pregnant women take antiviral drugs?

Yes. At this time, there are no studies suggesting harm to a pregnant woman or her unborn baby if she takes antiviral medicine. The flu can cause severe illness and even death in pregnant women. Taking antiviral medicine can help prevent these complications. At this time, Tamiflu® is the best medicine to treat pregnant women who have 2009 H1N1 flu.

Links to Vaccine Information Sheets in English and other Languages

Vaccine Information Sheets are available on the H1N1 Flu page of our site at:

<http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com/h1n1.cfm>

The sheets are available for both the inactivated and the live intranasal vaccine in the following languages:

- English
- Spanish
- Chinese