



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

James W. Clyne, Jr.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

September, 2009

Dear Colleague,

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is taking many important steps to prepare for this year's flu season, especially given concerns about novel Influenza A (novel H1N1) virus, formerly referred to as swine flu. This letter is written to clinical and support services providers who work with people living with HIV/AIDS. In the coming weeks and months, it is likely that your patients and clients living with HIV will ask questions about seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu. To find the latest information about seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu, health care providers and the public can visit the NYSDOH website at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/> or the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene website at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/flu/flu.shtml>.

The NYSDOH AIDS Institute supports the Center for Disease Control's *Interim Guidance – HIV Infected Adults and Adolescents: Considerations for Clinicians Regarding Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus*. These clinical guidelines can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_HIV.htm. When reviewing the guidance, please be sure to explore any updated links that are embedded in the document in order to learn the latest developments. For example, the following link within the guidance offers updated information about chemoprophylaxis and treatment: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>.

People living with HIV/AIDS are a priority population to receive both the seasonal influenza vaccine and the novel H1N1 vaccine. It is important for clinical and support services providers to encourage all individuals with HIV to take advantage of these important vaccines to protect their health. It is anticipated that vaccine for novel H1N1 flu will be available in mid-October. Attached to this letter is another recent communication from the Department of Health that outlines how health care settings can pre-register to obtain the novel H1N1 vaccine for administration to their adult patients. The AIDS Institute would like to take this opportunity to urge HIV care settings to be prepared to offer the novel H1N1 vaccine to their patients.

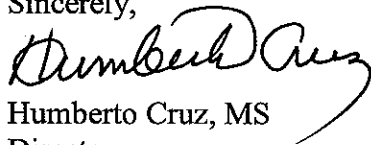
People with HIV who develop symptoms of the flu should call their health care provider for guidance. A visit to the doctor or emergency room is usually not necessary. It is important to note that laboratory testing is not routinely recommended for persons with suspected novel H1N1 infection. Depending on the clinical test used, influenza testing may not be sensitive or timely enough to assist with initial patient management decisions. At this time, laboratory screening for novel H1N1 should be considered for individuals who are hospitalized or are experiencing severe symptoms. Clinicians treating people with HIV who are suspected of having novel H1N1 flu should use their clinical judgment when deciding whether to perform laboratory testing for novel H1N1 infection. Clinicians can access an HIV specialist to discuss case-based HIV clinical care by calling 1-866-637-2342.

Below are a set of key messages that clinical and support services providers should make every effort to share with people living with HIV/AIDS:

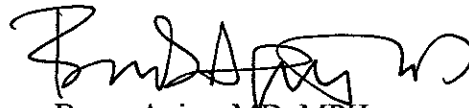
1. Adults and adolescents living with HIV should take advantage of the seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as possible and the novel H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. People living with HIV/AIDS are considered a priority population for both vaccinations.
2. All adults, adolescents and children should take common sense steps to avoid the flu. These include: avoiding close contact with people who have flu-like symptoms; staying home when you are sick; washing hands frequently; and using a tissue to cover the mouth when coughing or sneezing.
3. The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu are similar to those of the seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, chills and fatigue. People with HIV who develop symptoms of the flu should call their health care provider for guidance. A visit to the doctor or emergency room is usually not necessary.
4. Medication is available to treat novel H1N1 if a person becomes infected. People with HIV/AIDS can take these medications as they will not interfere with HIV antiretroviral treatment.

To assist you in educating people with HIV/AIDS about novel H1N1 flu, please find the attached consumer education fact sheet. The NYSDOH AIDS Institute will provide updates as information evolves in the coming weeks and months. Your efforts to address novel H1N1 and seasonal flu are greatly appreciated and are an important service to promote well-being among people living with HIV/AIDS.

Sincerely,



Humberto Cruz, MS
Director
AIDS Institute



Bruce Agins, MD, MPH
Medical Director
AIDS Institute

Attachments



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

James W. Clyne, Jr.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

September 14, 2009

Dear Adult Health Care Provider:

This letter provides information about how to pre-register your practice (located outside of New York City*) for novel influenza A (H1N1) monovalent vaccine to be administered to your adult patients (age 19 years and older) and office staff.

The novel H1N1 influenza virus, in conjunction with regular seasonal influenza viruses, has the potential to cause significant illness, hospitalizations and deaths this flu season starting this fall. Influenza vaccination is the most effective method to prevent influenza infection. A novel influenza A (H1N1) monovalent vaccine is expected to be available by mid-October 2009. In cooperation with the federal government and local health departments, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will make the monovalent vaccine available to health care providers in New York State (outside New York City). This undertaking will require the active participation of a wide range of immunization providers, but office-based providers will play a key role in delivering influenza vaccine to their targeted patients.

The following populations are recommended by CDC to receive novel influenza A (H1N1) monovalent vaccine as soon as possible:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers 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 health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

The full recommendations are available in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, August 28, 2009/58 at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5810a1.htm>.

Both the vaccine and the supplies required to administer the vaccine will be provided by the Federal government at no charge. Reimbursement for vaccine administration is likely to be covered by most private health insurers and will be covered by public health insurance (Medicaid/Medicare) plans.

Issues regarding the liability and costs associated with administering the H1N1 influenza monovalent vaccine are being addressed. The United States Department of Health and Human Services has issued a Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness "PREP" Act declaration for novel H1N1 influenza countermeasures. This declaration provides liability protections to providers of H1N1 influenza vaccine.

The allocation and distribution of the vaccine in New York State (outside New York City) will be managed by the NYSDOH in coordination with county health departments. In order to receive novel H1N1 influenza monovalent vaccine, providers must pre-register with NYSDOH. The information you provide will assist in allocating H1N1 vaccine throughout the State, taking into consideration the targeted population groups to receive the H1N1 vaccine.

*To obtain H1N1 vaccine in New York City, contact the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cir/a03c.html> or call 212-676-2323.

Pre-registration: All providers interested in receiving novel H1N1 influenza monovalent vaccine must pre-register at <https://hcsteamwork1.health.state.ny.us/pub/top.html>

- This pre-registration process is designed for you to express interest only and does not obligate you to receive/administer vaccine nor does it guarantee you will receive vaccine if supplies are limited.

Requirements for receipt of vaccine:

- In order to receive novel H1N1 influenza monovalent vaccine, providers must sign a federally-mandated Provider Agreement agreeing to appropriately store and handle the vaccine, to give vaccines only to the CDC targeted groups, and to report vaccine usage (see next bullet).
- There is a federal requirement that providers of vaccine to adults (age 19 years and older) report at a minimum, vaccine doses administered by age group on a weekly basis. NYSDOH will set up a mechanism for this reporting.

Once your pre-registration is received and the remaining details of the vaccination campaign have been finalized, you will be contacted by the vaccine program to sign the federal Provider Agreement and instructed how to order vaccine.

Option to report vaccinations to the NYS Immunization Information System (NYSIIS).

NYSIIS, the state immunization registry, provides a number of advantages for providers of H1N1 monovalent vaccine: 1) automatically generates the federally mandated weekly vaccine usage reports, 2) monitors vaccine inventory to enable prompt reordering, 3) generates reminder lists and letters for the second influenza vaccine dose, if required, 4) provides a legal record of the vaccination, 5) enables correct ascertainment of prior influenza vaccine history if patients receive some influenza vaccine doses (seasonal and/or monovalent H1N1) at other provider sites, and 6) enables NYSDOH to more closely monitor possible vaccine adverse events. In addition, 47 electronic health record/billing vendors are approved to automatically upload immunization information into NYSIIS. The website above provides a link to a brief on-line orientation to NYSIIS and details on how to enroll in the system.

If you are not able to provide vaccine you can still contribute by educating and referring your patients and by volunteering at a public health-sponsored clinic. For information on volunteering, please go to www.nyhealth.gov/ServNY.

Your participation in the H1N1 influenza monovalent vaccine campaign is essential to ensuring that New Yorkers receive the most effective protection against H1N1 influenza. For more information on the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine, please go to the NYSDOH website at: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/> or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>. If you have any further questions, please contact the NYSDOH H1N1 hotline at 1-800-808-1987.

Sincerely,



Guthrie S. Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H.
Deputy Commissioner
Office of Public Health

If you have HIV/AIDS, you may be wondering if you are at risk of serious illness from novel H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu). In the past, people with HIV/AIDS have not seemed more likely to get seasonal flu than other people. However, HIV-infected people, and especially persons with low CD4 cell counts or AIDS, can have more severe complications from seasonal flu. It is possible that HIV-infected people could also have more serious complications from infection with novel H1N1 flu.

For the best protection – get vaccinated

Those with HIV/AIDS will be among the first people able to get the H1N1 flu vaccine. Talk to your doctor about getting this new vaccine just as soon as it is available. Also, be sure to get vaccinated against seasonal flu. Seasonal flu can cause severe complications for people with HIV/AIDS.

Take these everyday steps

There are many things you, your family and friends can do to help prevent the spread of germs and reduce the chances of getting seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu.

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water – or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue (or the crook of your elbow).
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people and stay home when you are sick.

Stay Healthy

Eat right, get enough sleep, and reduce stress as much as possible. Staying healthy reduces your risk of getting the flu and other infections, and helps your immune system fight off the flu if you do get it.

If you are currently taking antiretrovirals or treatment to prevent opportunistic infections, be sure to continue your prescribed treatment and follow the advice of your health care provider to keep your immune system as healthy as possible.

If you have a household member or close contact with someone who has the flu or flu-like symptoms check with your health care provider to see if you should take antiviral medications to prevent the flu.

Watch for flu symptoms

Symptoms of the new H1N1 flu are like those of seasonal flu, and include: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting. If you think you may have the new H1N1 flu, do the same as you would for routine seasonal flu – contact your doctor right away for guidance. Your doctor will decide if testing or treatment is needed.

For more information, go to www.nyhealth.gov and www.flu.gov.
Check with your doctor if you have specific questions or concerns