

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Update #147 - Influenza Reporting Requirements - October 6, 2005

PURPOSE

From October 2, 2005, through May 14, 2006, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will conduct statewide influenza surveillance and report the weekly influenza activity to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As of December 1, 2004, laboratory-confirmed influenza was added to the reportable disease list in New York State (Section 2.1 of the New York State Sanitary Code). The purpose of this notification is to remind you of the reporting requirements for influenza, including:

- Laboratory-confirmed influenza by certain laboratories
- Pediatric deaths due to confirmed or suspected influenza
- Patients hospitalized with laboratory-confirmed influenza
- Nosocomial influenza by hospitals and nursing homes

INTRODUCTION

Influenza is a common cause of respiratory illness in the United States during the months of October through May. Influenza illness results in significant morbidity and mortality yearly among the very young, the elderly, and those persons with chronic illness. The CDC estimates national mortality from influenza illness is approximately 36,000 deaths per year. Outbreaks of influenza in long-term care facilities and in communities can also challenge an already burdened healthcare system. A pandemic of influenza would have the capability to cause substantial illness and death, disruption of healthcare and other social services, and widespread panic. The yearly impact of influenza illness and the possibility of a pandemic give impetus for a sensitive influenza surveillance system for early detection of illness and implementation of control measures. Influenza is already reportable in 30 states.

The addition of laboratory-confirmed influenza to the list of reportable conditions in New York State has greatly enhanced influenza reporting and surveillance efforts. The following new reporting requirements resulted in local health departments and the NYSDOH having more comprehensive and complete information on influenza activity. This enabled us to quickly detect where influenza is occurring, as well as the specific strains that were circulating. With time, season-to-season comparisons of the number of cases and age groups reported by county and statewide will be done.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Laboratory-confirmed influenza:

- At this time, positive influenza test result reporting from laboratories that electronically submit files through the Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS) using ASCII or HL7 formats and LOINC coding is continuing.
- Laboratories that do not use the ECLRS reporting methods above may also report positive influenza test results, but at this time are not being asked to initiate reporting.
- Laboratories entering data directly into the ECLRS Web page may report influenza positive test results using the drop-down menu for reportable conditions.
- The ECLRS Help Desk (866-325-7743) is available to answer questions and assist laboratories using ECLRS or laboratories that would like to start reporting electronically.
- At this time, medical providers do not need to report individual cases of influenza or submit a confidential case report (DOH-389) to the local health department except for fatal pediatric influenza illness (see below).

Pediatric deaths due to confirmed or suspected influenza:

- Medical providers and medical examiners should report to the Erie County Department of Health
 - Cases of fatal influenza illness in pediatric patients less than 18 years of age
 - Any pediatric death resulting from a clinically compatible illness
- Laboratory testing for influenza A and B viral infection may be performed on pre- or post-mortem clinical specimens. The local health department can advise on appropriate laboratory testing and can facilitate referral of specimens as needed to NYSDOH Wadsworth Center Laboratory.

Weekly reporting of the number of patients hospitalized with laboratory-confirmed influenza:

- Hospitals are required to report each Wednesday on the Hospital Emergency Response Data System (HERDS) for the previous week ending Saturday midnight the number of newly identified hospitalized laboratory-confirmed influenza cases by age group.
 - The age groups are to be aggregated into the following categories:
 - 0-23 months
 - 2 to 18 years
 - 19 to 64 years
 - > 64 years
 - Patients should be reported only once when first diagnosed.
 - Include both community-acquired and nosocomial cases of influenza.
 - For nosocomial acquisition of influenza, the Health Care Facility Infection Control (Nosocomial) Report (DOH-4018) is to be submitted to the NYSDOH Regional Epidemiology Program by fax at (518) 408-1745.
 - Reporting will be initiated Wednesday October 12, 2005, for the week starting Sunday October 2 and ending Saturday midnight October 8, 2005.
 - Weekly reporting for the 2005-2006 influenza season will continue through May 24, 2006.
- If you have any technical difficulties with accessing or using HERDS, please contact Lisa Beaudoin at (518) 473-1809 or John Kushner at (518) 408-5163.

Reporting of nosocomial influenza by nursing homes and hospitals:

Hospitals and nursing homes are required to report nosocomial influenza to the local health department as well as to the NYSDOH. This includes one or more laboratory-confirmed nosocomial cases of influenza or an increased incidence of nosocomial febrile respiratory illness. An increased incidence would include an increase over the baseline level of febrile respiratory illness, or a cluster of 2-3 patients or residents on one unit with febrile respiratory illness. Cases that were not acquired at your facility but may involve a threat to a unit or facility should also be discussed with your Regional Epidemiologist. Examples would include a case of community-acquired influenza in a patient in a high-risk setting, such as an organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) unit; or a case of healthcare-associated influenza that was acquired at another facility. The hospital or nursing home should complete NYSDOH Nosocomial Report Form DOH-4018 (available at <http://www.nyhealth.gov/nysdoh/infection/infecreport.pdf>) and fax it to the NYSDOH Regional Epidemiology Program, central office, at (518) 408-1745. The appropriate regional office will follow up with the facility making the report.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this new reporting requirement. Questions related to the above reporting requirements should be directed to the **Erie County Department of Health (716) 858-7967** (Monday - Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm).