



County of Erie

CHRIS COLLINS
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ANTHONY J. BILLITTIER IV, M.D., FACEP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY #258-First Responders

UPDATED – September 22, 2009

HEALTH ADVISORY: NOVEL INFLUENZA A H1N1 (SWINE FLU) VIRUS UPDATE

Please distribute immediately to First Responders and Public Safety

Answering Point (PSAP) Staff.

The Erie County Department of Health continues to remain actively engaged in planning for and response to continued Novel Influenza A H1N1 Virus activity. As H1N1 information continuously changes, we will provide up to date guidance for the public at large, as well as for healthcare providers including prehospital care providers on our web site at <http://www.erie.gov/health/h1n1.asp>.

In addition to information on our web site, attached are two (2) documents that you can use to help prepare your agency and providers for the upcoming flu season. The first document is an H1N1 Advisory Update for EMS Agencies from the New York State Bureau of EMS. Please review the material and share it with all of your responders.

The second document, “Top 10” provides more general guidance and includes information to help minimize spread of the influenza virus in the community. Please assist us by delivering this message to the general public whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Finally, we anticipate that the Novel Influenza A H1N1 vaccine will be available beginning in limited supply in the near future. Individuals who **routinely** respond to emergency medical calls and provide direct patient care are included in one of the vaccination target groups. These individuals should consider receiving the Novel Influenza A H1N1 vaccine.

For those in the target groups who wish to receive the vaccine, we urge you to make arrangements for vaccination through your primary healthcare provider. Alternatively, agencies may choose to arrange for the administration of vaccine through your occupational medicine provider. Health care providers who agree to receive and administer H1N1 vaccine must pre-register with the NYS Department of Health at <https://hcsteamwork1.health.state.ny.us/pub> as soon as possible. Please share this information with them.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Erie County E.M.S. Office at 681-6070.

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary



**STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

433 River Street, Suite 303 Troy, New York 12180-2299

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

James W. Clyne, Jr.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

To: All EMS Agencies

From: Disaster Preparedness Unit,
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

Date: September 16, 2009

Subject: H1N1 Advisory Update for EMS Agencies

Introduction

In anticipation of the upcoming influenza season, the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services is providing the following update regarding the continuing spread of novel H1N1 influenza occurring in New York State.

Additional information is available on the following websites:

- NYS Department of Health: www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/
- CDC: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/
- NYCDOH/MH: www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cd-h1n1flu.shtml

Background

- Data indicate novel H1N1 influenza virus is comparable to seasonal influenza in terms of the severity of illness and transmission of infection.
- NYS Department of Health continues to recommend that infection control measures for novel H1N1 influenza be similar to those taken for seasonal influenza.
- These recommendations apply to ALL patients with influenza, or those with acute febrile respiratory illness.
- Additional information on the outbreak, as well as further clinical guidance, will be provided as it becomes available. EMS providers should monitor local Health Department (LHD) and the CDC and State Websites listed above.

What EMS personnel should do?

EMS personnel responding to calls should, at a minimum be aware of the following:

What am I looking for?

Acute febrile respiratory illness, including Influenza-like-illness (ILI)

Symptoms of Influenza-like-illness (ILI):

- Fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) cough and/or a sore throat in the absence of a KNOWN cause other than influenza.

Persons with influenza or novel influenza (H1N1) have experienced:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- A number of people infected with the novel influenza (H1N1) virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

In children, emergency warning signs that indicate a need for urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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, emergency warning signs that indicate a need for urgent medical attention include:

- 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

How can I prevent personal exposure to the flu?

If you are treating a patient who complains of or exhibits influenza-like symptoms, you should:

- Continue to use appropriate precautions (*Standard and Droplet*) for ALL patient care activities. (See below)

Infection Control for ILI Patients: Standard plus Droplet Precautions

- EMS personnel who have close contact, including examining, collecting specimens or providing direct medical care for the patient with acute febrile respiratory illness, should follow Standard plus Droplet precautions
- Meticulous hand hygiene should be performed before and after patient care and after removal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- At a minimum, EMS staff should follow droplet precautions by wearing a facemask and gloves; the facemask should be put on before interacting with the patient. Your Regional Medical Control may require a higher level of PPE.
- Offer masks to all patients with symptoms of a respiratory illness if the patient can tolerate wearing them. Otherwise provide patients with tissues.
- When removing PPE, gloves should be removed first, then the facemask, followed by hand hygiene.
- Remember to avoid possibly contaminating other areas of the ambulance vehicle or equipment; remove potentially contaminated PPE when finished caring for the patient or when cleaning the ambulance.

Aerosol-generating procedures

- Includes nebulized treatments, intubation and extubation, tracheal suctioning, bronchoscopy and laryngoscopy performed on patients with acute febrile respiratory illness
- Fit-tested N-95 respirators and eye protection (goggles or face shields) should ALWAYS be worn by EMS personnel performing these procedures on patients with febrile respiratory illness

Cleaning and housekeeping of ambulance and equipment

Routine cleaning and disinfection methods used during influenza seasons should be used in the management of novel H1N1 influenza. Any surfaces and equipment used during a response should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected following those procedures. More detailed information can be found at:

http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/cleaning_ems.html

Reporting to the hospital

Make every reasonable effort to advise the receiving hospital that you are transporting a patient with an influenza-like illness, so they can take any appropriate precautions and provide you with

any additional guidance on arrival destination. You may be directed by Medical Control or the receiving hospital of an alternate transport location.

Protecting yourself and your family

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Get vaccinated for seasonal influenza early this and every year,
- Get vaccinated for novel H1N1 influenza once the vaccine is available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If one is not immediately available, cough or sneeze into your arm or shoulder (not hands). Throw any tissues into the trash after use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective as long as hands are not visibly soiled.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid unnecessary close contact with sick people.

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with flu-like symptoms, follow your EMS agency's exposure control plan.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you are exhibiting the following signs and symptoms:

Fever	Cough
Sore throat	Runny or stuffy nose
Body aches	Headache
Chills	Fatigue
Diarrhea	Vomiting

- Stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.
- If you are sick with a febrile respiratory or influenza-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after you start feeling better and your fever is gone, without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is indicated.

Collaboration with Dispatch and 911 Centers

Whenever possible, responding EMS crews should be advised by dispatch and 911 centers of calls in which ILI symptoms have been described to the Call taker. This may assist in the appropriate identification and use of PPE by the responding EMS providers helping to reduce unnecessary exposures to ILI.

Summary

This continues to be an evolving situation. New and updated Information and recommendations are being developed. Please remain vigilant in your response to influenza -like symptoms by keeping yourself informed and referring to the above listed websites for the latest information and recommendations.

Approved by: Office of the Director
Bureau of EMS

Cc County EMS Coordinators
Regional EMS Councils
State Emergency Medical Services Council
State Emergency Medical Advisory Committee
Regional Program Agencies
Office of Fire Prevention and Control
State Emergency Management Office
Office of Homeland Security
Regional BEMS Staff

H1N1 & Seasonal Influenza (Flu) Prevention

Erie County



Chris Collins
County Executive

Anthony J. Billittier IV, M.D., FACEP
Commissioner of Health

Department of Health

Top 10 things you can do to prevent the flu.

1. Wash your hands often, especially after coughing & sneezing. Wash for 20 seconds with soap & warm water. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers or wipes if soap and water are not available.
2. When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth & nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Throw the used tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose & mouth. Germs spread this way.
4. If you are sick, stay home and away from others for 24 hours after your fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$) is gone without the use of fever reducing medications.
5. Stay away from sick people whenever possible.
6. Most people who get the flu do not need to go to the doctor or hospital unless they are [severely ill](#) or have an underlying condition.
7. If you are [severely ill](#) or at [high risk](#) for influenza complications and become ill, call your health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.
8. Consider getting vaccinated for seasonal flu if it is [recommended for you](#). Your primary care provider is the best place to get vaccinated. If that is not possible, then [click here](#) to find a list of community sites that offer the seasonal flu vaccination.
9. Consider getting vaccinated for H1N1 if you are in one of the following [initial target groups](#)
 - Pregnant women
 - Persons who live with or provide care for infants aged <6 months
 - Health-care and emergency medical services personnel
 - Children and young adults aged 6 months - 24 years
 - Persons aged 25 - 64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications
10. Keep informed by going to the following websites.
 - [ECDOH](#) (www.erie.gov/health/swine_flu.asp)
 - [NYSDOH](#) (www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/)
 - [CDC](#) (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/)
 - [Flu.gov](#) (www.flu.gov/)