

**Ulster County Health Department
Seasonal and H1N1 Influenza Advisory
Update 12/30/09**

Influenza Monitoring:

In Ulster County and New York State, the overall level of flu activity is currently moderate and appears to be decreasing when compared to last week. Ulster County Hospital Emergency Departments reported decreases in the number of patients seen with influenza like illness last week. School absenteeism rates for last week and this week are not relevant due to holiday break schedules.

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has been conducting enhanced surveillance to track influenza activity in New York State (NYS) for the 2009-2010 influenza season. Since September 1, 2009, H1N1 influenza has been the predominant influenza strain seen across the state. As predicted, the 2009-2010 influenza season started much earlier than previous influenza seasons, with a sharp increase in all surveillance indicators during the month of October, a high peak of activity in early November, followed by a decline over the past 4 weeks. The November peak was higher than that seen in any previous influenza season to date, representing over a 300% increase in reported positive influenza laboratory tests and hospitalizations compared with the peak of a typical influenza season.

Active surveillance is being conducted at a network of hospitals across NYS. Data collected since October 1, 2009, reveals that among hospitalized patients, the majority have at least one underlying medical condition. The most common underlying medical condition among pediatric patients was asthma (66%), followed by neuromuscular disorder (11%), obesity (7%), chronic cardiovascular conditions (5%), diabetes mellitus (3%), other chronic lung disease (2%), and other chronic metabolic disease (1%). Among adult patients the most common underlying medical conditions were asthma (30%) and other chronic lung disease (30%), followed by diabetes mellitus (26%), chronic cardiovascular conditions (25%), obesity (23%), neuromuscular disorder (13%), other chronic metabolic conditions (12%), and morbid obesity (12%). Nearly all (98%) pediatric and adult patients recovered from their illness. Death occurred in 3 (1.5%) of 200 pediatric cases and 4 (2.7%) of 146 adult cases.

Status of Prevention Efforts:

Flu Vaccination Information:

Protect Yourself and Your Family By Getting Vaccinated: Vaccinations against H1N1 flu will continue through 2010. It's never too late to get vaccinated! The Ulster County Health Department is planning additional H1N1 clinics for the first quarter of 2010 and when more information is available, details will be announced on our website.

Where to Find Vaccine: If your provider has not ordered H1N1 vaccine, and does not plan to order H1N1 vaccine, call the Ulster County Health Department Flu Hotline at 845-340-3093 or log onto www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health to get updated information about when vaccination clinics for the general public will be held. You can also check <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/> to see if there are any flu vaccine clinics scheduled near you.

Getting the Vaccine is Much Safer Than Getting the Flu: The H1N1 vaccine is as safe and effective as the ordinary seasonal flu vaccine and is developed using the same process as seasonal vaccine. Flu vaccines have consistently had excellent safety records in recent decades, as documented in multi-year studies. The CDC issued a report December 4 on the safety of the H1N1 vaccines that found no substantial differences between the safety of the H1N1 vaccines and that of seasonal flu vaccines (see: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5848a4.htm>).

Persons at High Risk for Complications from Influenza: The H1N1 influenza vaccine can now be administered to anyone who wishes to receive it. However, some people are considered at high risk for complications from the flu. The same groups at increased risk of seasonal influenza-related complications are considered to be at increased risk for 2009 H1N1 influenza-related complications and include the following:

- Children <5 years, but especially children younger than 2 years old.
- Persons with the following underlying medical conditions:
 - o Chronic pulmonary disease, including asthma;
 - o Chronic cardiovascular (except isolated hypertension), renal, or hepatic disease;
 - o Hematological disorders, including sickle cell disease;
 - o Metabolic disorders, including diabetes;
 - o Neurologic or neuromuscular disorders that increase the risk for aspiration or compromise the handling of respiratory secretions (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders); or
 - o Immunocompromising conditions, including HIV infection, leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, generalized malignancy, chronic renal failure, nephrotic syndrome; those receiving immunosuppressive chemotherapy (including corticosteroids); those who have received an organ or bone marrow transplant; and those who have central nervous system fluid leaks.
- Persons <19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy for diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or Kawasaki disease.
- Pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks postpartum (including following pregnancy loss).
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.
- Adults ≥65 years.

For additional information about H1N1 and updates, visit our website at: www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health or call seasonal flu hotline: **340-3093**. Also visit <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/> to see if there are any flu vaccine clinics scheduled at locations near you or call NYS DOH Hotline 1-800-808-1987.