

Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: All HAN recipients
From: Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist
Subject: **Early Start to Influenza Season in Maine**
Date / Time: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 at 3:00pm
Pages: 3
Priority: Normal
Message ID: 2017PHADV015

Abstract:

Influenza has officially arrived in Maine. Multiple Maine hospitals reported influenza positive lab results in the last few weeks, including two PCR confirmed cases, one with foreign travel and one with no travel history. Both individuals tested positive for influenza A H3. One individual was hospitalized with influenza. The 2017-2018 influenza season officially begins on October 1, 2017, but individuals should NOT wait to get vaccinated as influenza is already present in the state. Both Influenza A and B strains are currently circulating nationally. The 2017-2018 quadrivalent influenza vaccine contains components of both A strains (H1 and H3) as well as two B strains (Yamagata and Victoria) and is likely to offer good protection. Quadrivalent vaccine is recommended for optimal protection, however if only trivalent vaccine is available the recommendation is not to wait and obtain the vaccine as soon as possible.

Maine CDC is hosting a “**Start of the 2017-18 Influenza Season**” conference call on **Thursday, September 28, 2017 at 1:00PM.**

Early Start to Influenza Season in Maine

Influenza has officially arrived in Maine. Multiple Maine hospitals reported influenza positive lab results in the last few weeks, including two PCR confirmed cases, one with foreign travel and one with no travel history. Both individuals tested positive for influenza A H3. One individual was hospitalized with influenza. The 2017-2018 influenza season officially begins on October 1, 2017, but individuals should NOT wait to get vaccinated as influenza is already present in the state. Both Influenza A and B strains are currently circulating nationally. The 2017-2018 quadrivalent influenza vaccine contains components of both A strains (H1 and H3) as well as two B strains (Yamagata and Victoria) and is likely to offer good protection. Quadrivalent vaccine is recommended for optimal protection, however if only trivalent vaccine is available the recommendation is not to wait and obtain the vaccine as soon as possible.

Maine CDC is hosting a “**Start of the 2017-18 Influenza Season**” conference call on **Thursday, September 28, 2017 at 1:00PM**. The intent of this call is to provide updates for the season, outline resources available, and remind facilities what the requirements are for the influenza season. This call is particularly relevant for: infection practitioners, providers, laboratorians, employee health, emergency preparedness, hospital administration, and long term care facilities. Talking points will be distributed after the call, as well as questions and information highlighted on the call.

Lines may be limited, so if multiple people from one location intend to call in, please call in together.

Call in number: 877-455-0244 Code: 6681820529#

Recommendations for this influenza season include:

Diagnosis: Clinicians should consider influenza in the differential diagnosis of febrile respiratory illnesses in patients of any age, encourage their patients to be immunized against influenza if they have not already done so, and review updated recommendations of the use of antiviral medications for influenza prophylaxis and treatment.

Treatment: Oseltamivir and zanamivir are the two drugs currently recommended for treatment and prophylaxis. Providers will be notified through the health alert network if national recommendations for treatment and prophylaxis are revised.

Laboratory: Diagnostic labs and willing facilities should forward the first ten positive influenza test specimens to HETL for confirmatory PCR and subtyping. Testing through HETL is free of charge.

Instructions on submitting specimens for flu testing can be found at:

http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/submitting_samples.htm

Reporting: Infection preventionists, laboratories, clinicians, school nurses, and other reporting entities must report:

- Laboratory confirmed influenza hospitalizations,
- Pediatric influenza deaths, and
- Suspected outbreaks of influenza

to Maine CDC by phone at 1-800-821-5821 or by fax at 1-800-293-7534. Maine CDC appreciates all reports of positive influenza tests by any testing method either by phone (1-800-821-5821) or fax (1-800-293-7534).

Vaccination: The best way to prevent influenza is by getting vaccinated. Maine CDC and national authorities recommend all individuals older than 6 months be immunized, even if they were vaccinated for influenza last season. All individuals with conditions that place them at high risk for complications of influenza should be vaccinated as soon as possible. Influenza vaccine is available in Maine right now.

Prevention: As we enter the influenza season, it is important to remember the “No Flu 4 You” guidelines to help prevent illness: Wash your hands; cover your cough; stay home when you’re sick; and get vaccinated.

For up-to-date information and recommendations on influenza for health professionals, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals>

For influenza surveillance information in Maine, go to www.maine flu.gov.