

August 25
2009

Volume 1 • Issue 1

PANDEMIC H1N1 INFLUENZA

Staff Update

Keeping staff informed about the Department of Public Health's pandemic H1N1 flu preparedness & response efforts

Welcome to the first issue of *Staff Update*, which will provide you with key information on the department's activities in preparing for and responding to the 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza (swine flu).

The department is building upon lessons learned during the spring emergence of H1N1 to increase our capabilities to monitor influenza, support rapid distribution of vaccine, and communicate effectively with schools, clinicians, and community groups and organizations. *Staff Update* will keep you informed of these activities.

Issues will be published on an as-needed basis and will be distributed to you by e-mail. Past issues will be archived on Public Health's Pandemic H1N1 Staff Info page (see link at bottom).

Key messages

- Since its first appearance in mid-April, worldwide, pandemic H1N1 influenza has remained a moderate illness with no sign of increased severity.
- The H1N1 virus has caused 7,983 hospital cases and 522 deaths in the U.S., as of August 20. (About 36,000 people die in the U.S. from flu-related causes each year, on average, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]).
- Vaccination planning for both seasonal and pandemic influenza H1N1 is well underway and involves distribution through private and public channels.
- We anticipate the H1N1 vaccination will be ready for distribution in mid-October.
- Pandemic H1N1 vaccine will only be available to health care providers through collaboration with state and local health departments. Public Health has created an online order form where vaccinators can pre-order FREE H1N1 vaccine. Go to www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/H1N1/vaccine/index.htm.
- The CDC's priority groups for H1N1 vaccine:
 - > People between the ages of 6 months and 24 years
 - > Health care and emergency services personnel
 - > Pregnant women
 - > People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
 - > People 25-64 years old who are at high risk for pandemic H1N1 flu infection because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.
- Of the 10 million residents in LA County, it is estimated that 5.5 million of them fall into the priority groups for H1N1 vaccination. The primary source of vaccination will be a person's usual source of care.
- Public Health has formed a flu steering committee and seven workgroups (e.g., clinical messaging, lab and surveillance, vaccine distribution, schools/daycare communications, and workforce readiness and resiliency). The goals are to improve flu detection, prepare Public Health and partner agencies to respond to flu, distribute vaccine, and communicate with staff, as well as public and private partners.
- All employees should ensure that family emergency plans are current and that they are prepared to support the department in various response activities.

Expected roles of the Public Health staff

Pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine will be distributed by the department through numerous Point of Dispensing (POD) sites throughout LA County.

Many Public Health professional and administrative staff members outside of Community Health Services will be called upon to assist in POD operations. As a result, staff should make plans now to ensure they are prepared. This includes the following:

- Update your family emergency plans now. If you have children or pets, or care for your elderly

more >>>



parents, make back-up arrangements with someone in the event that you are unavailable.

- Strongly consider seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine (initially for priority groups) for both yourself and family members.
- Realize that vacation or travel activities may be denied during the influenza season to ensure adequate staffing during this crucial time.
- Workforce members are expected to remain aware of the department's influenza-related activities and to be able to provide accurate information to others. Use the resources in this newsletter to expand your knowledge and to share information.

What clinicians are being told

Clinicians are being provided information through the California Health Alert Network (CAHAN), a web-based system that distributes health alerts and notifications to key external partners.

Information being shared with the medical community includes the CDC's recently identified priority groups for the H1N1 influenza vaccine. Of note, older individuals are at less risk for influenza than some other groups, such as kids, young adults and pregnant women.

This year, two different vaccines for influenza will be available: vaccine for regular, seasonal influenza, and vaccine for pandemic H1N1. It is recommended that individuals in the priority groups receive both vaccines.

Public Health is preparing messages that clinicians may share with patients concerned about influenza. For example, most people who have been sick with this virus recover at home without treatment, and there is no need to schedule a physician visit or to seek care in an emergency room. Parents with children with flu-like symptoms are being asked to keep them at home for seven days, or for at least 24 hours after their fever has resolved. As during the spring 2009 emergence of H1N1, guidance is available to providers on prioritizing the use of antiviral medications for treatment or chemoprophylaxis (preventive medication) of patients at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

Clinicians who call with questions that you cannot answer should be directed to the Acute Communicable Disease Control program (see box).


MANAGERS

Please post in your work area and distribute to your staff

What the public is being told

Public Health is disseminating information to explain that there are two different influenza vaccines, and that one of these (pandemic H1N1 vaccine) will likely require two doses to be effective.

The CDC has prepared several guidances, such as one for individuals with specific chronic disease conditions (e.g., heart disease, stroke, or other cardiovascular conditions), and one for caring for a sick person at home. General information on influenza can be found on the CDC's Website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>.

Public Health is in the process of revising its Website (<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>) to create H1N1-specific portals for various audiences, such as clinicians, schools, media, and the public. 

WHERE TO DIRECT INQUIRIES

Clinician Inquiries

About Guidance, Infection Control, Lab Testing, Treatment

- **Acute Communicable Disease Control**
(213) 240-7941
(213) 482-4856 Fax
acdc2@ph.lacounty.gov E-mail
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/h1n1.htm>

About Vaccine Issues, Ordering Vaccine

- **Immunization Program**
(213) 351-7800
(213) 351-2780 Fax
ip@ph.lacounty.gov E-mail
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/>

Public Inquiries

- 2-1-1 to find out about LA County health and human service programs
www.healthycity.org
- Flu H1N1 Hotline (CA Dept of Public Health)
(888) 865-0564
<http://www2.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx>

Media Inquiries

- **External Relations & Communications**
Public Information Office
(213) 240-8144
(213) 481-1406 Fax
media@ph.lacounty.gov E-mail