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H1N1 (Swine) FLU UPDATE: October 16, 2009

Flu Surveillance

The Albany County Department of Health (ACDOH) is seeing considerably increased levels of influenza like illness (ILI) reported by health care providers, Emergency Departments, schools and colleges in Albany County and the Capital Region. This week, we have received sporadic reports of lab confirmed influenza A and influenza 2009 H1N1 cases among Albany County residents. A few schools have reported clusters of ILI among students and have taken appropriate infection control measures. ACDOH is continuing to monitor influenza activity on a daily basis.

Nationally, the H1N1 influenza virus continues to be the dominant flu virus circulating at this time. Thirty-seven states are reporting widespread influenza activity. In New York State, influenza activity is now considered to be widespread as of the week ending October 3, 2009. In Albany County, the University at Albany continues to report seeing a few students (out of a total student population of 18,000 students) per day with influenza like illness. The University at Albany is submitting two specimens per week from symptomatic students to Wadsworth Lab for influenza 2009 H1N1 testing as part of a sentinel surveillance program. At this time, only one University at Albany student has tested positive for H1N1 influenza. Siena College will also be submitting at least one specimen per week to Wadsworth Lab as part of the sentinel surveillance program. Siena has also had one student with a positive test result.

Flu Vaccination Information

The Albany County Health Department, hospitals in Albany County, and the Whitney M. Young Health Center have begun to receive small amounts of the H1N1 vaccine and will continue to receive shipments throughout the flu season. Some private healthcare providers are expected to begin receiving small amounts of H1N1 vaccine next week. At a CDC press briefing today, health officials were told to expect at least 25 percent less H1N1 vaccine by the end of the month than anticipated. Instead of the 40 million doses projected by the end of October, only 28 million to 30 million doses may be available for distribution throughout the U.S., according to Dr. Schuchat of the CDC. She stated that the CDC won't be expecting widespread availability until "the end of the month or until November." This news could delay local vaccination plans.

The NYSDOH will begin taking requests for H1N1 vaccine orders from private providers who have preregistered on or after October 19th. Vaccine orders will be accepted by calling: 1-800-KID-SHOT or 1-800-543-7468. The ability to order vaccine will be phased in and those who are pre-registered will be notified when they can begin to place orders. Those who have already registered have specified amounts of vaccine that they would like to receive. These requests are not orders, but will likely be used by the NYS Department of Health to direct some vaccine to practices before the ordering system is fully operational. Medical practices will, however, need to place orders with the NYSDOH and will be directed when it is possible to do so.

Health care providers can still pre-register their practices to receive H1N1 vaccine to be administered to their patients and staff when vaccine supplies increase. To do so, please visit the following website: <https://hcsteamwork1.health.state.ny.us/pub>. For those providers who have already pre-registered but have not yet signed a provider agreement, you can expect to receive notification from the New York State Department of Health shortly of the need to sign such an agreement.

Individuals in the priority groups (<http://www.flu.gov/individualfamily/vaccination/index.html#priority>) are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as the H1N1 vaccine becomes available. The Albany County Department of Health is planning to conduct community mass vaccination clinics once more H1N1 vaccine is available. Initially H1N1 vaccine will be available through healthcare providers. We will widely promote the availability of these public clinics as soon as adequate vaccine supply is confirmed.

There continues to be a delay in receipt of **seasonal** flu vaccine for some providers. This is thought to be due to a low-yielding B strain (less amounts of a portion of the vaccine needed to make the vaccine), expedited production of H1N1 vaccine, and providers double booking with manufacturers. According to the State Health Department, most doses of seasonal flu vaccine are expected to be out by the end of November. Please be patient. **There is still plenty of time to receive the seasonal flu vaccine.** You may contact your health care provider or visit www.albanycounty.com/health for more information about seasonal flu clinics.

Faith-based and Community Organizations – We Need You!

Faith-based and community organizations play a vital role in maintaining the health and well-being of our valued citizens. Often times, people look to such trusted organizations to learn about community issues and to seek guidance about what their role is in times of uncertainty. For this and many other reasons, we value and depend on your support and partnership to keep the people of Albany County safe and healthy. This year's flu season is no exception. We ask that you review and share the H1N1 Guide for Community and Faith-based Organizations provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Humans Services and the Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Here is the link: <http://www.flu.gov/professional/community/cfboguidance.html>

This guide will show you how your organization can:

- Ensure information is communicated effectively, accurately, and with cultural sensitivity to community members,
- Help those who are most vulnerable and hard-to-reach,
- Partner with local governments to assist in vaccine distribution, and
- Adjust activities in ways that will help protect your community from flu

Thank you for your partnership and commitment to our Albany County community.

If you would like to subscribe to or be removed from this list please e-mail BeReady@AlbanyCounty.com and insert "Remove from Weekly Update" in subject line.

More resources for more information about seasonal flu and H1N1 flu:

The Albany County Department of Health
www.albanycounty.com/health

Call Albany County's 24-hour automated flu hotline at (518) 447-4505 or call our live Flu information line at 447-4688 between 8:30am and 4:30pm, Monday-Friday

The New York State Department of Health H1N1 flu hotline at 1-800-808-1987

www.flu.gov