



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
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Augusta, Maine 04333-0011

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
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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 samples tested positive for influenza A; Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) confirmed one sample as influenza A/pH1N1. Maine CDC is also following up on an outbreak of influenza among travelers returning from a trip overseas. There is documented spread in Maine as contacts of the travelers also tested positive for influenza.

The 2018-2019 influenza season officially begins on September 30, 2018, 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 2018-2019 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.

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 samples tested positive for influenza A; Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) confirmed one sample as influenza A/pH1N1. Maine CDC is also following up on an outbreak of influenza among travelers returning from a trip overseas. There is documented spread in Maine as contacts of the travelers also tested positive for influenza.

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Maine CDC will host our “**Start of the 2018-19 Influenza Season**” conference call later in September. Information on the date, time, and call-in numbers will be released once everything is finalized.

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.