

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: All HAN Recipients

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Maine CDC Director
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SUBJECT: **Widespread Influenza Activity in Maine**

DATE: Tuesday, December 18, 2012

TIME: 10:00am

PAGES: 2

PRIORITY: **Medium**

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Widespread Influenza Activity in Maine – December 18, 2012

Summary: Influenza activity in Maine has steadily increased in November and December. Influenza A/H3 and influenza B have been confirmed in Maine indicating both strains are circulating. Maine CDC has followed up on 13 outbreaks of influenza as of Tuesday December 18th. Influenza hospitalizations are also being reported, indicating the severity of illness this influenza season. One pediatric death attributed to influenza was reported to Maine CDC last week. Influenza vaccination is still strongly encouraged and is widely available, especially to protect those persons at risk of more severe disease. The vaccine appears to be a good match to the circulating strains this year, and it is not too late to get vaccinated.

Background: Maine's first laboratory confirmed case of influenza was identified as influenza A/H3 in the end of October. Influenza B was confirmed in a patient during the last week of November. Laboratory confirmed cases of influenza are steadily increasing, and Maine reported widespread activity (meaning increased influenza-like illness and laboratory confirmed influenza in at least half the regions of the state) to federal CDC for the week ending December 15th.

Recommendations:

- **Prevention:** Maine CDC recommends following the “No Flu 4 You” guidelines which include:
 - **Wash your hands:** Both the general public and healthcare providers should remember to wash their hands frequently to prevent transmission of influenza
 - **Cover your cough:** Use tissues, or cough into your sleeve
 - **Stay home when you are sick:** Symptomatic individuals should remain home while sick. Maine CDC recommends staying home until 24 hours after fever resolves without the use of medications.
 - **Get Vaccinated:** Maine CDC recommends vaccination for everyone aged 6 months and older, especially for those people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza. Influenza vaccine is provided at no-cost by the state of Maine for children under the age of 19 years. Vaccine is still available through school sponsored vaccine clinics, healthcare providers, and many local pharmacies and offers protection in 14 days. For questions about vaccination please contact the Maine Immunization Program at 800-867-4775 or through immunizeme@maine.gov.
- **Diagnostic Testing:** Maine CDC recommends that health care providers consider influenza testing for patients with influenza-like illness (defined as fever greater than 100° F with cough or sore throat, in the absence of another known cause) who are hospitalized, who have died, or for whom a diagnosis of influenza would affect clinical care, infection control, or management of contacts.
- **Treatment:** Tamiflu and Relenza are both approved antivirals for influenza. Updated guidance for use of Antivirals for the Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza are <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>
- **Reporting:** All influenza outbreaks and pediatric influenza deaths are reportable conditions to Maine CDC. Maine CDC also requests reports of:
 - **any** laboratory confirmed influenza among hospitalized persons
 - **any** suspicion of influenza among persons who have died
 - **any** laboratory confirmed influenza associated with an outbreak

Reports can be provided to Maine CDC by fax at 207-287-8186 or by phone at 1-800-821-5821. Provider reporting is an essential component of influenza surveillance which is necessary to monitor the magnitude and severity of influenza in the state. Weekly influenza surveillance reports are available at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/influenza/influenza-surveillance-weekly-updates.shtml>.