



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:** **Widespread Influenza Activity in Maine**  
**Date / Time:** Wednesday January 30, 2019 at 9:45am  
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#### Abstract:

**Summary:** Influenza activity in Maine is now widespread with providers reporting laboratory confirmed influenza in all sixteen counties. Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) confirmed influenza A/pH1N1, influenza A/H3, influenza B/Victoria, and influenza B/Yamagata are all circulating in Maine. Maine CDC has followed up on fourteen (14) outbreaks of influenza as of Tuesday, January 29, 2019.

With all this increased influenza activity, it is not too late to get vaccinated. Vaccination can reduce illness and prevent hospitalization and death. Influenza vaccination is strongly encouraged throughout the season and is still widely available.

## Widespread Influenza Activity in Maine

**Summary:** Influenza activity in Maine is now widespread with providers reporting laboratory confirmed influenza in all sixteen counties. Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) confirmed influenza A/pH1N1, influenza A/H3, influenza B/Victoria, and influenza B/Yamagata are all circulating in Maine. Maine CDC has followed up on fourteen (14) outbreaks of influenza as of Tuesday, January 29, 2019. With all this increased influenza activity, it is not too late to get vaccinated. Vaccination can reduce illness and prevent hospitalization and death. Influenza vaccination is strongly encouraged throughout the season and is still widely available.

**Background:** Maine CDC identified the first laboratory confirmed case of influenza typed as influenza A/pH1N1 in September, prior to the official start of the 2018-19 influenza season on September 30, 2019. Influenza A/pH1N1 remains the most commonly identified strain in Maine, which matches national trends. Laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza and reports of outbreaks are gradually increasing. Maine reported widespread influenza activity (meaning increased influenza-like illness and laboratory-confirmed influenza in more than half the regions of the state) to federal CDC for the week ending January 26, 2019.

### 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 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](mailto:immunizeme@maine.gov).
- **Diagnostic Testing:** Maine CDC recommends that healthcare providers consider influenza testing for patients with influenza-like illness (defined as fever of 100° F or greater 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.

Influenza testing is available free of charge through HETL. Requisition forms and submission requirements are available at [mainepublichealth.gov/lab](http://mainepublichealth.gov/lab).

- **Treatment:** Tamiflu (oseltamivir), Relenza (zanamivir), Rapivab (peramivir), and Xofluza (baloxavir) are approved antivirals for influenza. Treatment should begin as soon as possible. Updated guidance for use of Antivirals for the Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>

Clinicians are reminded to treat suspected influenza in high-risk outpatients, those with progressive disease, and all hospitalized patients with antiviral medications as soon as possible, regardless of negative rapid influenza diagnostic test results and without waiting for RT-PCR testing results. Early antiviral treatment works best, but treatment may offer benefit when started up to 4-5 days after symptom onset in hospitalized patients. Early antiviral treatment can reduce influenza morbidity and mortality.

- **Reporting:** All influenza outbreaks, laboratory confirmed influenza hospitalizations, and pediatric influenza deaths are reportable to Maine CDC. Maine CDC also appreciates reports of laboratory confirmed influenza (including rapid positives) but particularly:
  - **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>.

**For more information:**

- Maine CDC's influenza webpage: [www.maineclu.gov](http://www.maineclu.gov)
- Federal CDC's influenza webpage: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- Maine's weekly surveillance reports: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/influenza/influenza-surveillance-weekly-updates.shtml>