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Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
From: Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist
Subject: Influenza Arrives– Maine, September 2019
Date / Time: Friday, September 27, 2019 at 11:45am
Pages: 3
Priority: Normal
Message ID: 2019PHADV025

Abstract:

Influenza has officially arrived in Maine. Multiple Maine facilities reported influenza positive lab results in the last week, including a PCR confirmed case, which tested positive for influenza A and was typed at Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Lab (HETL) as influenza A/H3. This individual is an adult who was not hospitalized, was unvaccinated, and had recent travel history.

The 2019-2020 influenza season officially begins on September 29, 2019. 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 2019-2020 quadrivalent influenza vaccine contains components of both A strains (H1 and H3) as well as two B strains (Yamagata and Victoria). 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.

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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, zanamivir, peramivir, and baloxavir marboxil are drugs currently recommended for treatment and oseltamivir and zanamivir are recommended for 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. Influenza testing through HETL is always free of charge. Instructions on submitting specimens for flu testing can be found at:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/submitting-samples.shtml>.

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 electronic laboratory reporting, 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. For healthcare providers enrolled in the Maine Immunization Program, vaccine is available for children and can be ordered through ImmPact.

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.