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Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: All HAN Recipients
From: Nirav D. Shah, MD, JD, Director of the Maine CDC
Subject: **Widespread Influenza Activity in Maine**
Date / Time: Tuesday, January 7, 2020 at 4:30pm
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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 nine (9) outbreaks of influenza as of Tuesday, January 7, 2020.

With increased influenza activity, it is not too late to get vaccinated. Influenza vaccination is the best way to prevent illness. Vaccination is strongly encouraged throughout the season and is still widely available.

Widespread Influenza Activity in Maine

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Background: Maine CDC identified the first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza typed as influenza A/H3 in September, prior to the official start of the 2019-20 influenza season on September 29, 2019. Though influenza A/H3 continues to circulate, influenza A/pH1N1 and influenza B/Victoria are the most commonly identified strains in Maine so far this season. 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 4, 2020.

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 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 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.

- **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 through electronic laboratory reporting, 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.maineflu.gov
- Federal CDC's influenza webpage: www.cdc.gov/flu
- Maine's weekly surveillance reports: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/influenza/influenza-surveillance-weekly-updates.shtml>