

Important Health Notice

June 11, 2009

Information for Healthcare Professionals UPDATE

Volume 6, Issue 14

Page 1 of 2

This Important Health Notice (IHN) is based on current information received to date and provides the following:

- Status update
- Significance for Ontario of the World Health Organization declaration of Phase 6
- Reinforced direction on lab testing

Status Update:

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the pandemic alert level from Phase 5 to Phase 6. Designation of this phase indicates that a pandemic is underway. However, this designation is based on sustained human-to-human transmission in more than one WHO Region, and does not indicate any change in the severity of the circulating virus.

As of June 10, 2009 there were 1,638 lab-confirmed cases of novel H1N1 Influenza A virus in Ontario. Of these cases, 54 reported travel to Mexico prior to symptom onset; 775 cases acquired Influenza A H1N1 in Ontario; 15 cases traveled to locations other than Mexico; in the remaining cases the exposure is unknown. At this time there have been few hospitalized cases, most of whom have recovered and have been discharged.

Significance of the Phase 6 Declaration for Ontario

The clinical guidance for health care providers dealing with the novel H1N1 Influenza A virus in

Highlights:

- The WHO has raised the global pandemic alert level from Phase 5 to Phase 6, signaling that a global pandemic is underway.
- This is based on trends in transmission globally, and does not reflect any change in severity of the circulating virus.
- Guidance to health care settings in Ontario remains unchanged.

Ontario remains unchanged by this declaration. This includes the guidance related to laboratory testing, as provided in the June 4th Important Health Notice and related guidance documents.

Reminder: Direction on Laboratory Testing

Testing for novel H1N1 Influenza A is not recommended for patients with mild illness. Specimens should only be submitted for testing where lab results are required for clinical management of hospitalized cases of ILI or where patients are at high risk for complications from influenza.

Testing carried out to date has confirmed that the novel H1N1 influenza A virus is currently the predominant circulating strain of influenza in many communities. Monitoring for changes to the severity of the virus is ongoing.

Guidance documents continue to be available on the ministry H1N1 Flu Virus website in the section for Health Care Providers under

“Emergency Departments” and “Ambulatory Care Settings” at www.health.gov.on.ca

The Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP) lays out a range of suggested activities to be undertaken in Phase 6. However, this planning was based on a scenario involving moderate to severe illness. As the novel H1N1 Influenza A virus has to date caused mostly mild illness, decisions regarding these activities will continue to evolve with the situation. The launch of any new ministry initiatives or guidance will be communicated through IHNs and other ministry documents.

The OHPIP can be accessed at:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_plan.html

Health Care Provider Hotline:

If you are a health care worker and have any questions or concerns on the Important Health Notices and related guidance documents, please call the Health Care Provider Hotline toll-free at 1-866-212-2272*.

Hours of Operation**:

Monday-Friday	0900hrs to 1600hrs
Saturday-Sunday	CLOSED**

*This hotline is intended to provide guidance and support to health care workers only and is not a service to provide general information to the public.

**Hours of Operation are subject to change. Please monitor future Important Health Notices for changes.

**On-call services are available for urgent issues, and can be reached through the Health Care Provider Hotline.

(original signed by)

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