HEALTH ADVISORY UPDATE
JANUARY 6, 2014

INCREASE IN SEVERE INFLUENZA CASES INFECTED WITH INFLUENZA A(H1N1)pdm09 VIRUS

SUMMARY:
A recent increase in reported cases of severe influenza among young and middle-aged adults infected with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 (pH1N1) virus have been reported nationally and in Contra Costa County. More information can be found at: http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00359.asp or http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/dcdc/Documents/CDPH%20Update%20Severe%20influenza%20H1N1.pdf.

CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS:
The best tool for prevention is vaccination. Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. Anyone not yet vaccinated this season should receive influenza vaccine now.

Antiviral treatment for those with suspected influenza should begin as soon as possible. It is not recommended to wait for laboratory confirmation of influenza.

BACKGROUND:
For the 2013 influenza season, pH1N1 has been the predominant circulating virus so far. During the 2009 influenza season, the pH1N1 strain affected more children and young adults than adults aged ≥65 years and illness in these groups was more severe compared to other groups. The pH1N1 virus strain is included in all of this season’s influenza vaccine for the Northern Hemisphere. While influenza vaccination remains the best way to prevent infection, a history of influenza vaccination does not rule out influenza virus infection in an ill patient with signs and symptoms of influenza illness.

CLINICAL NOTES
• The symptoms of pH1N1 are similar to the symptoms of a seasonal influenza infection. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea.
• pH1N1 infections can vary in severity from mild to severe illness. Severe infection can result in pneumonia, respiratory failure, and even death. Sometimes bacterial infections may occur at the same time or after a pH1N1 infection and lead to pneumonias, ear infections, or sinus infections.
The incubation period for influenza is estimated to range from 1 to 4 days with an average of 2 days. Influenza virus shedding during the contagious period begins the day before illness onset and can persist for 5 to 7 days. Some persons can shed virus for longer periods including children and immunocompromised individuals.

**Infection Control**
- Standard and droplet precautions should be implemented for influenza patients
- Influenza patients should be isolated in a single room or cohorted with other influenza patients if a single room is not available.
- For aerosol-generating procedures, healthcare personnel should use an N95 respirator or higher level of respiratory protection.
- Currently, CDC has not detected increased transmissibility of pH1N1.

**Treatment**
- Treat with neuraminidase inhibitor antiviral drugs (oral oseltamivir and inhaled zanamivir).
- Antiviral treatment is recommended as early as possible (ideally within 48 hours of symptom onset but still beneficial after 48 hours) for any patient with confirmed or suspect influenza who are: 1) hospitalized; 2) have severe, complicated or progressive illness; or 3) at higher risk for influenza complication.

**Reporting**
Contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 to report:
- Laboratory-confirmed influenza deaths in people ages 0-64 years
- Acute respiratory outbreaks

**Testing**

Starting antiviral treatment should not wait for laboratory confirmation of influenza.

- Testing with reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) is the preferred testing method when there is a strong clinical suspicion, even if rapid test is negative.
- Negative results on rapid influenza diagnostic tests do not exclude influenza virus infection in patients with signs and symptoms.
- Collect respiratory specimens for confirmation and further subtyping by RT-PCR.
- Testing is available through the Contra Costa Public Health Laboratory (http://cchealth.org/flu/pdf/severe_case_history_form.pdf)
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- 1/6/2014

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:
The Contra Costa Public Health, Communicable Disease Programs can be reached 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM Monday - Friday at: 925-313-6740 (phone) or 925-313-6465 (fax).