

Alaska Public Health Advisory

AKPHAN

June 19, 2015

Sustained Influenza Activity in Alaska – Summer 2015

This advisory alerts Alaska health care providers of ongoing confirmed influenza activity in several regions of Alaska, and advises providers to consider influenza when evaluating patients presenting with compatible symptoms, even though we are beyond the traditional 'flu season'. Recent activity includes continued community spread of influenza viruses and influenza activity among tourists on cruise ships and overland tours. Both influenza A and B viruses have been circulating.

Guidance for health care providers

VACCINATION

- There is still time for people who have not yet been vaccinated this season — this year's influenza vaccine expires June 30, 2015.

ANTIVIRALS

- If you suspect influenza and it is within 48 hours of symptom onset, consider treating patients with antivirals regardless of rapid influenza test results. A negative result cannot be used to exclude an influenza diagnosis.
- Antiviral treatment may be considered at any time after onset for patients with suspected influenza who
 - are hospitalized;
 - have severe, complicated, or progressive illness;
 - are at higher risk for influenza complications based on age or medical conditions (see below); or
 - live or work in a congregate setting.

Persons at increased risk for influenza complications

- children aged <2 years;
- adults aged ≥65 years;
- persons with chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension alone), renal, hepatic, hematological (including sickle cell disease), metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus) or neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions (including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy/seizure disorders, stroke, intellectual disability/mental retardation, moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury);
- persons with immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV infection;
- women who are pregnant or postpartum (within 2 weeks after delivery);
- persons aged <19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy;
- American Indians/Alaska Natives;
- persons who are morbidly obese (i.e., BMI ≥40); and
- residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.

TESTING

- Submit nasopharyngeal specimens from patients with compatible influenza-like illness symptoms to the Alaska State Virology Laboratory (ASVL) for respiratory virus panel testing;
- Testing information and test request forms are available at:
<http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Labs/Pages/publications/default.aspx>

REPORTING

- Positive influenza tests, outbreaks of respiratory illness, and suspected influenza deaths are reportable to the Section of Epidemiology (SOE) at (907) 269-8000.
- Reporting forms are available at: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions>

REFERENCES

- Alaska Influenza Webpage at <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/id/influenza/fluinfor.htm>
- CDC - Infection Control in Health Care Facilities. Available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol>
- CDC - Long Term Care Facility Influenza Control Guidance. Available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>
- CDC - Influenza Antiviral Medications: Summary for Clinicians. Available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>
- Conditions Reportable to Public Health in Alaska. Available at:
<http://epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions/default.htm>