



Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
286 Water Street
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel: (207) 287-8016
Fax: (207) 287-9058; TTY: 1-800-606-0215

September 3, 2009

Dear Clinicians Who Provide Health Care for Pregnant Women:

This letter has important information. We need your help to prevent serious illness and save lives among your patients. As you may know, pregnant women and infants are being disproportionately affected by novel H1N1 influenza virus. Reports indicate that one-third of pregnant women with novel H1N1 influenza virus are so ill, mostly with severe respiratory distress, that they require hospitalization (Lancet, July 29, 2009). Deaths of otherwise healthy pregnant women are also being reported. Severe disease among pregnant women was reported from past pandemics, such as the one in 1918.

We expect an escalation of H1N1 infection this fall as well as the arrival of seasonal influenza. Therefore, your patients may more likely encounter H1N1, and their ability to recover may be compromised if they also encounter seasonal influenza.

One of the most important and immediate steps you can take is to register to receive H1N1 vaccine from Maine CDC. As a health care provider for pregnant women, we want to assure you and your patients have early access to this vaccine.

Maine CDC will be hosting a conference call for health care providers who care for pregnant women on Thursday September 17th 12 noon – 1 pm. The call in number is: 1-800-914-3396 and the pass code is: 473623. The purpose of the call will be to review the recommendations below and to take your questions.

Maine CDC Recommendations for Clinicians Providing Health Care for Pregnant Women:

Vaccinate:

- Recommend and offer H1N1 novel influenza vaccine for pregnant women and their appropriate family members as soon as it arrives, which we expect to be in mid-October.
- **Register to receive H1N1 vaccine from the Maine CDC. This requires you to fill out and submit a Provider Agreement for H1N1 Vaccine, which can be found at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/maineflu/h1n1/provider-agreement-2009-2010.shtml>. The H1N1 vaccine is free, will come with some supplies, and you will be able to bill for vaccine administration.** We expect to have some thimerosal-free H1N1 vaccine available for pregnant women. Up to date CDC guidance on H1N1 influenza vaccine can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination>.

- Recommend and offer seasonal influenza vaccine for pregnant women and their appropriate family members now. To order or find out information on obtaining seasonal influenza vaccine contact the Maine CDC's Immunization Program (287-3746) or the Immunization Action Coalition's website at <http://www.preventinfluenza.org/ivats>. Maine CDC has some thimerosal-free seasonal influenza vaccine available for pregnant women and young children.

Prevent:

- Educate and inform your patients.
 - Prepare your office for H1N1: <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=76279&an=2>
 - All pregnant women need to know the symptoms of influenza and to report to a health care provider such symptoms immediately.
 - All pregnant women and their families need to know how to prevent H1N1 (frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes with tissue or sleeve, and staying away from others who are sick).
 - If a friend or family member is ill, the pregnant woman should arrange for someone else to care for those who are sick.
 - Post the enclosed posters. If you would like to receive additional copies, they can be downloaded at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/Flu%20Posters.htm> or requested by emailing at disease.reporting@maine.gov.

Antiviral Medications:

- We ask that pregnant women who have suspected novel H1N1 influenza A virus be tested for influenza.
- Pregnant women who have symptoms consistent with influenza illness should receive antiviral treatment as early as possible after illness onset. Clinicians should not wait for test results to initiate treatment.
- Symptoms of influenza like illness are a fever (100 degrees or greater) and a sore throat or cough, in the absence of another cause such as strep throat. If novel H1N1 is prevalent in your area of the state (as it has been in southern Maine much of the past 4 months), then these symptoms should be considered to be influenza.
- Prophylaxis with an antiviral medication should be considered for pregnant women who have been in contact with someone with novel H1N1.
- Keep updated with the latest treatment guidelines for pregnant women: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/clinician_pregnant.htm.

Report:

- Clinicians should call Maine CDC (1-800-821-5821) to report pregnant women requiring hospitalization related to H1N1 or any outbreak of H1N1.

Keep Informed:

- Clinicians can call Maine CDC 24 hours a day for clinical consultation such as questions on testing or treatment: 1-800-821-5821.

- Keep educated:
 - US CDC H1N1 Clinicians' Guidance for Pregnant Women
http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/clinician_pregnant.htm
- Patient resources:
 - US CDC H1N1 Resources for Pregnant Women
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy>
 - US CDC H1N1 Resources for Parents
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents/>
- Keep informed:
 - Check the **Maine CDC H1N1 Website:** www.maine flu.gov
 - **Check the Weekly H1N1 Updates:**
Check the weekly updates on H1N1 in Maine on Maine's H1N1 website: www.maine flu.gov. You can subscribe to these updates via their RSS feed.
 - **Sign Up to Receive Health Advisories:**
Sign up to receive urgent updates from Maine CDC's Health Alert Network (HAN). The easiest and quickest way to sign up is through the HAN Alert RSS feed at www.maine public health.gov (midway down the center of the homepage).
 - **Follow Maine CDC's Updates and Other Information on:**
 - Facebook (search for "Maine CDC"),
 - Twitter (<http://twitter.com/MEPublicHealth>),
 - My Space (www.myspace.com/maine public health), and/or
 - Maine CDC's Blog (<http://maine public health.blogspot.com/>).
 - **Can't Find an Answer, Consider Calling or Emailing Us:**
 - For health care providers: for clinical consultation, outbreak management guidance, and reporting of an outbreak of H1N1 call Maine CDC's toll free 24-hour phone line for health care providers at: 1-800-821-5821.
 - General Public Call-in Number for Questions: 1-888-257-0990
NextTalk (deaf/hard of hearing) - (207)629-5751
Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm
 - Email Us Your Questions at: Sue.Dowdy@maine.gov

Thank you very much for your attention to protecting your patients from the severe effects of novel H1N1 influenza! Feel free to call or email us if you have any questions or concerns, and join us on the September 17th conference call.

Sincerely,



Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH, FAAP
Director, Maine CDC/DHHS
State Health Officer