



- Please bring to the attention of all doctors -

Date: 12 August 2009

Contact telephone number: 8226-7177 (24 hours/7 days)

Clinical and public health management of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza

South Australia has now recorded more than 4,500 cases of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza (with 9 related deaths), while more than 27,500 cases and 95 related deaths have been reported in Australia. Pandemic (H1N1) influenza currently represents over 80% of all influenza notifications in SA, and over 60% of all respiratory pathogens on which data are regularly collected.

Public health management

- A small number of workplaces and educational institutions are asking that all persons with respiratory symptoms should see their doctor, be tested, and obtain a clearance before returning to work or school. This is not appropriate advice and is overloading busy medical practices, Emergency Departments and laboratories.
- Testing should be prioritised for those with moderate to severe illness, those in vulnerable groups ([see below](#)) and in high risk settings, such as residential care facilities. PCR on a single deep nasal swab is the preferred test. Rapid antigen tests have much lower sensitivity.
- People in vulnerable groups should seek medical assessment as soon as possible after the onset of respiratory symptoms.
- Persons, including children, who are unwell with respiratory symptoms should stay home until they are well and fever has resolved.
- A vaccine is being produced and discussions are being held between the States and Commonwealth on release and priority populations. We expect to have further information in the next few weeks.

Notification

- Urgent notification by telephone on 8226 7177 is required only for suspected or confirmed cases in high risk settings, such as residential care facilities, and for patients admitted to ICUs.
- Routine notification by fax to CDCB on 8226 7187 is required for all other confirmed cases.
- The *Influenza H1N1 2009 (Swine) – Doctors Notification Form* can be downloaded from <http://flu.sa.gov.au/Swineflu.aspx>. Additional data on H1N1 cases are being collected on: symptoms, risk factors and complications, admission to ICU and antiviral administration (and date started). The support of doctors in obtaining this information is greatly appreciated.

Clinical management including antiviral medication

- The SA Health flu website <http://flu.sa.gov.au/Swineflu.aspx> has resources for the public and general practitioners. The list of designated community pharmacies for free Tamiflu distribution is at <http://www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Alerts-&-Recalls/090618-status-protect-Antivirals-H1N1.pdf>.
- To ensure antiviral treatment for patients in vulnerable groups is commenced within 48 hours of onset of influenza symptoms, GPs may choose to commence treatment while awaiting test results.
- When prescribing antivirals from the National Stockpile through designated community pharmacies, please mark the prescription “SA SP” AND include the specific condition (moderate to severe disease, pregnancy, respiratory disease, heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, morbid obesity, immunosuppression). **Patients may be charged if prescriptions are not appropriately completed.**
- Please encourage patients to ask a family member or friend to collect antiviral prescriptions on their behalf. Otherwise, encourage them to advise the pharmacy of their influenza like illness on arrival.
- Doctors are reminded that nebulisers can increase the risk of transmission to health care workers. Please consider reviewing the use of nebulisers for patients with asthma and chronic airways disease as there is good evidence that an inhaler with a spacer provides at least similar delivery of inhaler therapy as a nebuliser (see Public Health Alert 12 June 2009).

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Information contained within this advice should be treated as confidential and is for the intended recipient only.