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HEALTH ADVISORY *10/8/2009*

Influenza Reporting and Testing Recommendations for the 2009-2010 Flu Season

As you may have heard, the Emergency Departments at all 4 hospitals in our region are reporting a significant increase in traffic, much of it due to symptoms of Influenza Like Illness (ILI), requests for anti-viral medications, and H1N1 vaccinations. School absentee rates due to ILI are also increasing with many schools now reporting a greater than 10% absentee rate. We are encouraging our community to avoid going to the ED's and clinics for relatively mild influenza symptoms and using good prevention methods to prevent catching the flu.

Along with the significant influenza activity in our community and requests for H1N1 vaccine, the seasonal influenza vaccine supply seems to be slow in arriving. We exhausted our initial shipment of seasonal flu vaccine and may not receive the second shipment until November. Many local pharmacies that typically have seasonal flu vaccine are running low also. We are still assured there are ample supplies just the focus has shifted to shipping H1N1 vaccine at this point. Take this into consideration when you encourage your clients to seek seasonal flu vaccine. Seasonal influenza does not typically arrive in the mid-Columbia until December or later so there is time for our community to get these vaccines when they arrive later.

Requests for H1N1 testing continue to come in. Please read the DOH algorithm before requesting this test by your laboratory. Not all individuals that have a positive influenza A rapid test qualify for H1N1 testing at the State Laboratory. Currently, well over 90% of circulating Influenza A is H1N1 and up to 40% of Influenza A negative tests are actually H1N1 also. The algorithm can be found at [DOH H1N1 Testing Algorithm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphi/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/sflu-testalg.pdf) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphi/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/sflu-testalg.pdf>) .

Use of anti-viral therapies needs to be considered carefully. Very few individuals meet the criteria for treatment according to CDC guidelines. These can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/recommendations.htm>

Finally, we encourage you to visit our updated web site at <http://www.bfhd.wa.gov/flu/index.php> We have many new brochures, posters and links that may be helpful to you.