

# Protecting Workers from H1N1 Influenza

Andrew Doniger    Margaret Peet  
Monroe County Dept. of Public Health

# H1N1 Virus and “ILI”

- We get influenza seasonal outbreaks every year.
- H1N1 is currently mild to moderate, similar to seasonal flu
- Highest risk group for complications and/or spreading disease includes pregnant women, children, caretakers of children 6 months old or younger, and young adults

# Transmission of H1N1

- Breathing in tiny droplets after an infected person has coughed or sneezed into the air.
- Touching surfaces that have been touched by an infected person
- Communicable period from 1 day before symptoms until 24 hours after the fever stops

# Symptoms of ILI

- ILI Influenza-like illness
- Fever (100+), AND respiratory symptoms
- So common that doctors do not feel that it is always necessary to test.
- Testing for severely ill or hospitalized patients
- As a result, we never know exact count of cases

# Usual Treatment For Ill Persons

- Stay Home & avoid close contact with others
- Get Plenty of Rest
- Fever lowering medication
- Drink clear Fluids (broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants)
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean hands

# Aggressive Treatment for Ill Persons—First 48 Hours

Anti-virals (Tamiflu) recommended for:

- those that have severe symptoms (like hospitalized)
- Children < 2 years old
- Adults 65+
- Pregnant Women
- People with certain chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions
- People Younger than 19 receiving long term aspirin therapy

# Three Priority Groups for H1N1 Vaccine

## Group 1:

- Pregnant Women
- Household and caregiver contacts of children younger than 6 months of age (e.g. parents, siblings, and child care providers)
- Healthcare and Emergency Medical Services Personnel

# Group 1 Priority for H1N1 Vaccine (continued)

- Persons 6 months to 24 years of age
- People aged 25 to 64 years with medical conditions associated with a higher risk of flu complications (e.g. asthma, diabetes)

# Group 2 Priority: H1N1 Vaccine

- All Persons 25 through 64 years of age

# Group 3 Priority, H1N1 Vaccine

- Persons age 65 and older

# Flu shots for employees

- Cost/benefit
- Employers may sponsor shot clinics at work or encourage shot or mist at doctor's office.
- 2 shots this year
  1. Seasonal flu
  2. H1N1 flu

# Threat assessment and steps to smart preparedness

- Business should identify emergency threats
- Designate emergency response coordinator
- Develop an emergency response plan
- Educate employees about likely threats

# Influenza Action Components

- Assigned Workplace Coordinator
- Policies for leave, telework & employee compensation
- Work environment promoting hygiene
  - tissues,
  - no touch trash cans,
  - hand soap/hand sanitizer,
  - disinfectants for work surfaces

# More Influenza Actions

- Procedure for response to someone getting sick at work
- Minimizing face to face contact
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles
  - Diet
  - Exercise
  - Vaccine as available

# Communication Tools

- Templates in CDC “Communication Toolkit”
  - Text messaging
  - E-mail messaging
  - Posters
  - Flyers

# Stopping transmission in the workplace

- Send ill workers home
- Ill workers not to return until 24 hours after fever has ended
- Wash hands frequently
- Cover your cough/sneeze
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth
- Good housekeeping (wiping surfaces with frequent human contact)

# Absence from work

- Exclusion from work of sick employees critical to keeping down illness rate in the workforce.
- Employer can mandate that an employee stay home when they are ill
- Common practice is not to require a “doctor’s note” prior to returning to work.

# Masks

- Better to send ill workers home
- Care givers to a sick family member may benefit by the sick person wearing a mask or wearing a mask themselves.
- Not likely that masks will be recommended for general public
- In other countries, custom for general public to wear mask during illness

# Kids and the flu

- H1N1 can infect anyone, but currently, tendency for illness in kids
- Causes child care problems for employees.
- Liberal parental leave policies for family illness are helpful in overall control of disease in the community

# Monroe County Coordinated Response to H1N1, 2009

- Incident command system instituted to assign tasks and insure coordination
- Primary Operations tasks
  - Vaccinations
  - Epidemiology Surveillance
  - Community Mitigation
  - Medical Community Mitigation

# H1N1 Vaccinations

## October/November 2009

- Hospitals & Other Medical Facilities/Medical organizations
- Physicians Offices & Clinics
- Colleges and Universities & Special Needs Facilities

# Community Clinics (November and December, 2009)

- Churches
- Other large public venues
- Workers will include
  - Large commercial nursing services
  - Public Health Department Staff
  - Volunteers

# Resources

- [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)
- <http://flu.gov/professional/business/index.html>
- <http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/>
- Margaret Peet:  
[mpeet@monroecounty.gov](mailto:mpeet@monroecounty.gov) 753-5452

# Questions/Discussion

# Additional Information

# Statistics On Who is Most Vulnerable to the novel H1N1 Flu

- The infection rate was progressively lower in adults as their age increased
- The infection rate for people 5-24 of age is 26.7 per 100,000
- 25-49 years of age 6.9/100,000
- 50-64 years of age 3.9/100,000
- Over 65 years of age 1.3/100,000 (20 times lower than in 5-24 age group)

# Emergency Warning Signs that Need Urgent Medical Attention

## Adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

# Emergency Warning Signs, Children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

# If H1N1 Severity Increases

- Potential School Closings
- High Risk Individuals Stay Home
- Mass gatherings could be canceled