

New Brunswick Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health Notice to Regional Health Authorities

December 19, 2018

RE: Reminder-Seasonal Influenza Program 2018-2019

As required by the *Public Health Act* and Regulations, Regional Health Authorities (RHA) are required to report all influenza cases to Regional Public Health including outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths **all year round**. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 is the predominant circulating strain in New Brunswick and in all Canada, so far this season. This strain typically affects children, young and middle-aged adults. The single most effective way of reducing the impact of seasonal influenza, especially for those most at risk of complications, is immunization.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

The majority of influenza activity occurs between October and April, however; the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) monitors influenza activity through our surveillance system **year round**. Since the beginning of the season and up to December 8, 2018, 67 influenza cases have been reported, 18 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 48 influenza A (unsubtyped) and 1 influenza B. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 is the predominant circulating strain in New Brunswick and in all Canada, so far this season. This strain typically affects children, young and middle-aged adults. People in these age groups particularly those with chronic conditions are more prone to get severe respiratory illnesses which can result in hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care units.

REPORTING

As per the *Public Health Act* and Regulations, RHAs are required to report all influenza cases to Regional Public Health including outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths **all year round**. To support the completeness of reporting, Emergency Room staff need **to routinely inquire and record the client's influenza vaccine status on all respiratory related admissions**. We depend on your timely and **complete** reporting on all cases of influenza to Regional Public Health so they can identify and report clusters and outbreaks of influenza like illness (ILI) and influenza to the OCMOH, and to provide follow up in the regions.

PREVENTION

- The single most effective way of reducing the impact of seasonal influenza, especially for those most at risk of complications, is immunization. It is important that the population continues to have access to the influenza vaccine. We are asking you as health care providers to continue to promote and provide the influenza vaccine to your clients.
- Emphasize basic, effective prevention messages such as frequent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and staying home when sick.
- Health facilities should have infection prevention and control protocols and emergency response plans to be able to contain and manage the surge in demand for care that can occur during outbreaks of viral illness such as influenza.

RESOURCES

For ongoing information on influenza activity, please see our weekly New Brunswick influenza report which is posted on our website:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/dc/content/influenza/influenza_surveillance_activities.html

For more information on the influenza vaccine for this season please see:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/or_healthprofessionals.html

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Russell, BA, BSc, MD, CCFP
Chief Medical Officer of Health