

Public health update to health professionals

1 December 2010

Status: Active

Pandemic Phase Change

This update is provided to health professionals for guidance on Australia's pandemic phase status moving from PROTECT to ALERT phase on 1 December 2010.

On 10 August 2010, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that the world is no longer in pandemic phase 6 and is now moving into a post-pandemic period for H1N1 (disease activity at seasonal levels). At that time it was considered appropriate that Australia remained in the PROTECT phase, as Australia was still in its influenza season and a late upsurge in pandemic influenza 2009 (pH1N1) cases was possible

The Department of Health and Ageing continued to monitor influenza surveillance data and has noted that Australia has seen a particularly late peak in the 2010 influenza season, with levels of influenza cases this season similar to those reported in 2007 and 2008 and significantly lower than that observed during 2009. The Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer (CMO), together with his expert advisory groups, has assessed Australia's current pandemic phase status and recommended the change of phase accordingly.

What does ALERT phase mean?

The ALERT phase is the phase between pandemics. The key element of the ALERT phase is heightened vigilance for a new influenza virus or an antigenic change in a current circulating influenza virus, which may be of concern. This is consistent with the WHO's recommendation to continue ongoing vigilance in the early post-pandemic period.

What activities will be undertaken in the ALERT phase?

- Routine surveillance for influenza, which includes medical practitioner and laboratory notification of laboratory confirmed cases as well as sentinel surveillance from general practice (Metropolitan, Regional and the Melbourne Medical Deputising Service), hospitals and Intensive Care Units.
- Continued promotion on uptake of the H1N1-specific vaccine (Panvax) –which will remain freely available until 31 December 2010 and trivalent seasonal influenza vaccine.
- Maintaining pandemic preparedness

Patient management

Patient management including testing, use of antivirals and personal protective equipment should be as per standard seasonal influenza management and at the clinicians' discretion.

Further information

Information on **seasonal influenza vaccination** is available at:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets/factsheets/influenza>

Information on **Panvax** is available at:

<http://humanswineflu.health.vic.gov.au/vaccine.htm>

For further information please contact the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit on 1300 651 160.



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Protect yourself. Protect others.