

Wednesday, 8 July 2009

VICTORIAN H1N1 INFLUENZA 09 UPDATE

Four further Victorians have died with H1N1 Influenza 09, Victoria's Deputy Chief Health Officer, Dr Rosemary Lester said today.

Dr Lester said the Department of Human Services had been notified of these deaths over the last few days.

Three died after being admitted to hospital with flu-like illness.

Victoria has now had 11 deaths associated with human swine flu, Dr Lester said.

The most recent death is a man, 68, who died in a Melbourne hospital.

We do not have permission from families to release further details on the three earlier deaths.

All four had underlying health conditions which made them more susceptible to illness, Dr Lester said.

Dr Lester said information on laboratory confirmed cases, hospitalisations and deaths associated with H1N1 would now be updated each day on the Department of Human Services website, <http://humanswineflu.health.vic.gov.au>

"It is important to remember that in the vast majority of cases, human swine flu is a mild illness which many people recover from without any medical treatment," Dr Lester said.

"However, as we have consistently stated, influenza can be severe for people with chronic medical conditions.

"In Victoria there have been 1876 cases of human swine flu diagnosed as a result of laboratory testing.

"We also know that there are many milder cases in the community which have not been tested, and indeed many of those cases have taken the normal advice for mild winter flu to stay home and recover."

Dr Lester said adults and children who may be at high risk due to conditions such as respiratory disease (such as asthma), heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, obesity and immunosuppression should present to their doctor if they develop respiratory symptoms, so that they can be treated as soon as possible. She said pregnant women and people of indigenous origin were also at higher risk.

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to provide protection against H1N1 Influenza 09, however it is still recommended as protection against seasonal flu for those for people aged over 65.

The pneumococcal vaccine, which protects against pneumonia, is also recommended for people over 65 and those with underlying medical conditions.

Along with the rest of Australia, Victoria is now in the protect phase as part of the ongoing response to the H1N1 virus.

What does ‘protect’ mean?

- **Currently the majority of people experiencing flu-like symptoms are making a full recovery without medical treatment. This means that those with mild influenza will no longer be given antivirals or Tamiflu;**
- **We still recommend voluntary home quarantine if you have mild flu. Stay at home to protect others from the flu;**
- **There is a continued focus on people from high risk groups who have influenza-like symptoms: pregnant women, those with respiratory disease (such as asthma), heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, obesity and immunosuppression; and**
- **In the majority of cases schools are no longer being closed.**

For the most up-to-date information:

- **Visit www.health.vic.gov.au**
- **Call the Influenza Hotline on 180 2007 or**
- **Call Nurse-on-Call on 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)**

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