

# Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza A Situation Update for Partners

## Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

November 13, 2009

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We streamlined this communication to address key information related to pH1N1 surveillance, pH1N1 vaccine and flu assessment centres.

You will find a link to the [previous biweekly updates](#) on our website. We will continue to work with and communicate to partners through regular channels to support ongoing planning and updates. If you have questions please contact your regular liaison at the health unit or call *Your Health Connection* at 721-7520 or 1 877-721-7520.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charles Gardner  
Medical Officer of Health

### **Surveillance**

**Simcoe Muskoka** is continuing to experience increasing localized influenza activity. We have two active institutional influenza outbreaks, including one new outbreak from this week. Public health laboratories are now only subtyping about 20 per cent of all specimens submitted due to limited capacity; however, the epidemiology shows that more than 99 per cent of all currently circulating influenza A viruses are pH1N1. There was a two-fold increase in the number of lab confirmed influenza A cases reported to the health unit last week when compared to the previous week.

Local emergency departments (ED) reported a slight decrease in the number of visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) last week when compared to the previous week; however, ILI visits in the ED are still elevated compared to the same period last year.

We continue to see steep increases in the number of schools reporting absenteeism of 10 per cent or more. Last week, more than two-thirds elementary schools reported student absenteeism above 10 per cent for the week, which was more than double from the previous week.

The majority of the reports that the health unit has received to date indicates relatively mild illness; however, hospital admissions for influenza have continued to increase recently as would be expected with the overall increase in influenza activity in our area. The health unit has confirmed that a local resident who recently died also had H1N1, although the contribution of H1N1 to the death is not known. The individual was elderly and had a number of other underlying medical conditions.

Many areas of the province appear to be nearing or reaching the peak of the second wave of the pandemic. Our local surveillance data indicates that we may be one to two weeks behind some of the earlier-affected areas. In Ontario, the per cent of positive influenza tests last week was 49 per cent, which was slightly down from 53 per cent from the previous week. The per cent of influenza laboratory tests that were positive for influenza in Simcoe Muskoka increased for the sixth

consecutive week last week and now stand at 49.5 per cent. This level was the same as the provincial average for last week, but is still lower than several hard hit jurisdictions where the rate of positive influenza tests ranged between 60 and 80 per cent.

## ***pH1N1 Vaccine***

The current priority groups for vaccination in Simcoe Muskoka have been expanded and now include:

- All people over the age of six months with chronic medical conditions
- People age 65 and over living in long term care residences
- Pregnant women
- Healthy children from six months up to and including those 18 years old
- Household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines (including those caring for infants 0 to 6 months old)
- Health care workers involved in the delivery of health care services or in pandemic response
- People living in remote communities
- Police, firefighters and institutional correctional workers

## **Vaccine supply and distribution**

We continue to supply vaccine to participating primary care physicians and obstetricians, long-term care homes, hospitals, rest and retirement homes, emergency management services, First Nations, and the Community Care Access Centres as they support our efforts to reach all those in priority groups who are eligible to receive the vaccine at this time.

To date the health unit has distributed close to 89,000 doses of vaccine to our health care partners and through our public health clinics. Our estimated target population in sequence one priority groups is 115,550.

In the past week the following groups were added to our priority groups and include an estimated 35,000 people aged 65 and over with chronic medical conditions, and 1370 firefighters, police officers and institutional corrections workers. Yesterday we announced the inclusion of those age 5 years up to and including those 18 years of age i.e., an estimated 97,000 children.

As you know from previous communications, we have established vaccination clinics operating five days weekly (including Saturdays) in six different locations on each clinic day throughout our district. The weekday hours of our clinics (10 a.m. to 8 p.m.) extend well after those of the school day. Our clinics are scheduled for the entire month of November, and will continue into December if necessary to meet the needs of the public.

Although a number of our clinics held on Saturdays are in centrally-located schools, we do not otherwise intend to conduct a school-based H1N1 influenza vaccination program, as we believe our present approach to be sufficiently accessible to children. As well it is not feasible for us to provide vaccination for all grades in all the schools within Simcoe Muskoka in a timely, equitable and efficient manner.

## Vaccine dosage

Yesterday, the Public Health Agency of Canada released updated recommendations on H1N1 flu vaccine dosing for children between 3 years and 9 years of age. The updated recommendations reflect findings from clinical trial results from Europe that suggest that a single half-dose of adjuvanted H1N1 flu vaccine for healthy children may provide an acceptable level of protection from infection from the H1N1 flu virus.

The updated recommendations and the studies they are based on have been reviewed with the Canadian Paediatric Society and the provinces and territories.

### ADJUVANTED\* Vaccine

CATEGORY	DOSING RECOMMENDATIONS
Age 0-5 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● H1N1 flu vaccine not authorized for use</li></ul>
Age over 6 months and less than 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 2 half-doses of adjuvanted vaccine There should be a minimum of 21 days between the 2 half-doses.</li></ul>
Age 3 to 9 years – Healthy Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 1 half-dose adjuvanted vaccine for now**</li></ul>
Age 3 to 9 years – Children with chronic medical conditions (see below)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 2 half-doses of adjuvanted vaccine There should be a minimum of 21 days between 2 half-doses.</li></ul>
Age 10 years + (including 65+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 1 dose adjuvanted vaccine</li></ul>
<p>*An adjuvant is a substance that is added to a vaccine to boost the individual's immune response. It includes naturally occurring oil (called squalene), water and vitamin E.</p> <p>**These recommendations may be updated as more information becomes available.</p>	

The chronic medical conditions include:

- cardiac or pulmonary disorders (including bronchopulmonary dysplasia, cystic fibrosis and asthma)
- diabetes mellitus and other metabolic diseases
- cancer, immunodeficiency, immunosuppression (due to underlying disease and/or therapy)
- renal disease
- anemia or hemoglobinopathy
- conditions that compromise the management of respiratory secretions and are associated with an increased risk of aspiration
- children and adolescents with conditions treated for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid.

## UNADJUVANTED Vaccine

CATEGORY	DOSING RECOMMENDATION
Pregnant women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 1 dose unadjuvanted vaccine</li></ul> <p>*If unadjuvanted vaccine is not available and rates of H1N1 flu are high or increasing, women more than 20 weeks pregnant should be offered adjuvanted vaccine.</p>

### Co-Administration Recommendations

- H1N1 flu vaccine may be administered concurrently with seasonal flu vaccine and other vaccines.
- If co-administered, injections should be given in separate limbs.
- If not given concurrently, there is no minimum interval required between the H1N1 flu vaccine and other vaccines.

This advice is consistent with the Canadian Immunization Guide.

### Flu Assessment Centres

Those with influenza-like illness (ILI) should continue to be encouraged to use [self assessment tools](#) and only seek medical attention when indicated (those at risk of severe disease or with symptoms of severe disease). Primary care offices and urgent care clinics continue to be part of the system of care for those with ILI.

In addition, the Royal Victoria Hospital announced today that a flu assessment centre is opening in Barrie on **Monday November 16** in an effort to divert non-urgent cases of ILI away from hospital emergency rooms. The Simcoe County Flu Assessment Centre is a partnership between the Royal Victoria Hospital, County of Simcoe, the Barrie and Community Family Health Team, North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Representatives of these agencies have been working together over the very recent weeks, building upon the local influenza assessment centre models, to make this clinic a reality.

This is truly a partnership of health care and municipal agencies who worked diligently to bring the necessary resources and health care personnel together in a very short time frame. This is an important initiative for our communities—both for those who need assessment for ILI and those who provide it—and partners should be pleased to see the fruition of their efforts.

As Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Gardner has certified that "alternative forms of influenza assessment, treatment and referral are needed to meet patient demands for influenza care", and submitted the required forms to the province as part of the funding application for assessment centres (per MOHLTC's [Funding Guidelines for Implementing Alternate Influenza Assessment, Treatment and Referral Strategies](#)).

The Simcoe County Flu Assessment Centre is located at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 170 Steel Street in Barrie. More information about the clinic, including the days and hours that the clinic is operating can be found at [www.rvh.on.ca](http://www.rvh.on.ca). The clinic will operate as long as deemed necessary.

The health unit is aware of centre developments in other regions in the Simcoe Muskoka jurisdiction. As a health unit we are offering to be the "lead agency" for flu assessment centres as

described within the provincial guidelines, in terms of communication with the province, and collating and submitting required documentation for possible cost reimbursements.

*Situation updates are distributed to a broad range of health unit partners including health care professionals, health sector emergency planners, community service providers (including those who work with vulnerable populations), educators and day care providers.*