

Health **FAX**

Rise in Influenza Activity: Institutions Encouraged to Continue to Provide Influenza Vaccinations

Attention: **Administrators, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health and Safety Professionals – Long Term Care Homes and Acute Care Facilities**

Date: January 10, 2011

Over the last couple of weeks, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has noted a marked rise in influenza activity. **Since Sept 1, 2010, 77 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza have been reported in the community which is higher than expected for this time of year (comparable 5-year-season-to-date average is 13 cases).** As seen in previous influenza seasons, higher rates of infection are being reported among children less than four years of age and **those older than 65 years.**

In the last 12 days, we have had 5 Influenza A Long Term Care Home (LTCH) outbreaks out of a total of 6 for this season.

The influenza vaccine for the 2010/11 season is currently a near 100% match to the circulating strains. Therefore, SMDHU is encouraging Administrators, ICP's and Occupational Health and Safety staff to continue to vaccinate staff and to influence staff to be vaccinated. Please note that staff rates have been on the decline since 2003.

Current average coverage rates for staff working in institutions stands at:

- LTCH's - 67%
- Acute Care Facilities – 40%

Staff with influenza-like illness should be advised to stay home from work while ill, and to practice frequent hand hygiene and cough etiquette.

SMDHU still has influenza vaccine available for physicians to order. To order vaccine fax your order form to 721-1495 or call 721-7520 ext. 8808.

For more information on or to report cases of influenza or other reportable diseases, please call the Communicable Disease Team at: (705) 721-7520 ext. 8809 or Toll Free at: (877) 721-7520 ext. 8809.

* Historic average excludes the 2009-2010 influenza season due to the pandemic