

## **Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Update**

Since the beginning of the pandemic H1N1 influenza outbreak in the spring, there have been 235 hospitalizations and 20 H1N1-associated fatalities in Orange County. The severity of pandemic H1N1 influenza illness seems similar to seasonal flu, although the populations who are affected are different. Pandemic H1N1 influenza is a particular concern for pregnant women, children, and adults with chronic medical conditions. Older adults are less likely to become infected, although the health risks to the elderly are similar to seasonal influenza if they do become infected.

The Health Care Agency (HCA) is participating in regular guidance and coordination calls with the California Department of Public Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HCA's Public Health and Health Disaster Management service areas are busy working with state and local partners in planning for fall pandemic H1N1 influenza activity – particularly the availability of vaccine in October. HCA is actively engaged in planning locally with many partners, including private health care providers, community clinics, hospitals, schools and colleges and organizations such as The Children and Families Commission.

Some of the activities HCA is engaged in are:

- Surveillance activity through Epidemiology and Public Health Laboratory programs to watch for early signs of increased influenza activity in the County or changes in the severity of disease.
- Prepositioning antiviral medications, personal protective equipment for health care workers and other supplies and equipment with hospitals and clinics around the county. HCA also maintains a cache of supplies for emergency purposes, with additional resources available from the federal and state stockpiles as needed.
- Keeping the community informed through
  - Regular updates on the HCA website [www.ochealthinfo.com](http://www.ochealthinfo.com)
  - Staffing the HCA Health Referral Line (800-564-8448)
  - Communications to partners through newsletters and bulletins such as the *Eye on Influenza* weekly update
- Working with California Department of Public Health and community partners in planning for administration of a pandemic H1N1 vaccine throughout Orange County beginning in October
- Collaborating with the southern California Health Officers to create consistent messages and policies for the region which represents more than 60% of the state's population.

Much of the pandemic H1N1 influenza response activity across the country is focused on vaccine. Nearly 200 million doses are being manufactured and distributed nationally between mid-October and the end of the year. Clinical trials indicate the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine is effective for most adults with one dose and clinical trials are underway now for children. This vaccination is in addition to the seasonal influenza vaccination.

All vaccine orders are placed through the California Department of Public Health and HCA is working with the State to monitor provider requests. HCA anticipates that pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine will be readily available from private providers, hospitals, clinics and pharmacies throughout the county. Though priority groups for pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine have been identified by the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention, if availability is abundant, prioritization may only be important to the initial distribution.

In addition to obtaining seasonal and, as applicable, pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccinations, HCA encourages the public to practice the basics:

- Cover your cough by coughing into a tissue or your elbow
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer regularly
- Stay at home if you are ill and assure your children stay home if they are ill

For more information, please visit the Orange County Health Care Agency website at <http://ohealthinfo.com/h1n1/>; the California Department of Public Health at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx>; or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>.