



Commissioner Notes

DEMHS has been working closely for H1N1 preparedness with the Department of Public Health, which is the lead state agency for the H1N1 Response in Connecticut. State level planning includes Pandemic Influenza Response and Vaccine Distribution Plans, along with Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) for over 50 state agencies to ensure provision of critical state government services. The COOP planning began in December of 2005 for pandemic preparedness, and Governor Rell further directed state agencies this past August to review their plans and convene their Incident Management Teams to prepare for H1N1-related issues. DEMHS has been working closely with the state Department of Administrative Services for the implementation of these plans across state agencies.

As part of the preparedness effort, three H1N1 Summits were held for schools K-12, for higher education, and for municipal officials. The Governor has also made several Public Service Announcements which have begun to air on television and radio. The first PSA emphasized the importance of personal preparedness. The Governor's message also directs Connecticut residents to go to the Connecticut Flu Watch web site [www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch] for more information. This web site is a central web portal not only for the public but also for schools, universities, health care providers, and businesses.

Beginning with the first outbreak of H1N1 in the Spring of this year, information sharing with our public and private partners, emergency management directors and municipal chief executive officers, school officials and state agencies was accomplished through a series of regular telephone conferences with DEMHS and DPH. A state-wide conference call for H1N1 was also held in September following the 3 summits to provide updated information. Additional conference calls may be scheduled if necessary to pass along new information. The first of a series of weekly 'H1N1 Situation Reports' was also released on October 8th.

DEMHS is also sharing information on the H1N1 incident through WebEOC. Over 650 individuals have been trained in Web EOC, from over 150 towns across the state, as well as state agency representatives. Additional WebEOC training has been scheduled.

DEMHS has also been collaborating with neighboring states and our federal partners. For example, this past July, Governor Rell joined five other Governors and representatives from DEMHS and DPH in a National Flu Summit to discuss the springtime H1N1 outbreak and planning for the fall flu season. The quarterly meeting of the Northeast States Emergency Consortium was held in August, chaired by the Connecticut Director of Emergency Management, Bill Hackett. This meeting focused on H1N1 issues, and included emergency management directors from each of the New England states and New York, along with state public health directors, FEMA Region 1 Acting Administrator Paul Ford, Admiral George Naccara, DHS Regional Coordination Team Lead, Admiral Michael Milner, Senior Federal Official for HHS in the Northeast, and Associate Director for Emergency Response at the CDC, Admiral Scott Deitchman.

DEMHS will continue working closely with our partners and stakeholders in preparation for H1N1. At the state level, we are working together with the Governor as the Chief Executive, the Department of Public Health as the subject matter experts and DEMHS as incident and emergency management specialists. A similar triad of CEO, Health and Emergency Management are working together at the federal level with the White House, HHS/CDC and DHS. A close working team including the CEO, Public Health Director and EMDs along with the Service Chiefs at the local level is also critical and should be reinforced moving forward in preparation for H1N1.

Be Ready
Peter Boynton, Commissioner

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www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch

Novel H1N1 Influenza: What Connecticut Residents Need To Know

What is novel H1N1 influenza? Novel H1N1 influenza, or swine flu, is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. The virus can spread from people who have it to other people through coughs and sneezes. Most of the cases in the United States to date have been mild.

What are the symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza? Novel H1N1 influenza symptoms appear to be like the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, lethargy, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting with novel H1N1 influenza

How does novel H1N1 influenza spread? Novel H1N1 influenza virus is spread the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can I protect myself from novel H1N1 influenza?

Here are the best ways to avoid getting or spreading novel H1N1 influenza:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not nearby, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue or the crook of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- **Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way.
- **Stay away from people who are sick.**
- **If you get sick, limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.**

These are the same protections as for seasonal flu and many other respiratory infections.

What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

Anyone with a fever and cough or sore throat should stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after the fever is resolved without use of fever-reduced medications (e.g. Tylenol, ibuprofen). Wash your hands frequently. Always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Call your health care provider if you are ill enough that you would normally see a health care provider. Use the same judgment you would use during a normal flu season. If you would not usually see a health care provider for the symptoms you have now, you do not need to see a health care provider. You should not go to the hospital for mild illness, but anyone with severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment immediately.

Should I be tested for novel H1N1 influenza?

Knowing you have novel H1N1 influenza will not affect how you are medically treated, but testing certain affected people can help health officials track the spread of the disease. Testing is now only recommended for people who are hospitalized for flu-like symptoms.

Is there a vaccine for novel H1N1 influenza?

A vaccine is currently being tested and will be available in the fall. The seasonal influenza vaccine does not protect you from novel H1N1 influenza. This makes the regular things you do to protect yourself from the flu, such as covering coughs and washing hands, all the more important.

If I experience flu symptoms, do I need medication?

The antiviral medicines Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) can help lessen novel H1N1 influenza symptoms, and are particularly important for people with severe illness or with risk factors for complications from flu. Groups at higher risk of complications from the novel H1N1 influenza include young children, pregnant women, and people with chronic illness. Flu patients who belong to those risk groups should seek treatment for flu symptoms. Treatment may also be appropriate for household members with special risk factors, to help prevent the infection.

What are the signs of more severe illness with novel H1N1 influenza?

While most of the current novel H1N1 influenza cases have been mild so far, people who get the flu should still be aware of some of the more severe illness with novel H1N1 influenza. If you become ill and have any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, symptoms that need emergency medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

What should I do if someone I live with is sick with flu-like symptoms?

Call your health care provider if the person is sick enough that you would normally see a health care provider. Use the same judgment you would use during a normal flu season. If you would not usually see a health care provider for the symptoms the person has, you do not need to take them to see a health care provider. If the symptoms are severe, the person should see a health care provider.

What should I do if someone I live with has confirmed novel H1N1 influenza?

Follow the same precautions you would to avoid ordinary seasonal flu:

- Limit your contact with the sick person. Avoid close contact such as kissing, and do not share towels, glasses or toothbrushes with the affected person.

- Avoid having visitors. If visitors must enter the home, they should avoid close contact with the affected person.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Wash dirty dishes and eating utensils in either a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap. You do not need to separate eating utensils for use by a patient with influenza.
- It is fine to do your laundry in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. It is not necessary to separate the patient's laundry.

Can household cleaning help prevent transmission?

Yes. Studies have shown that the virus can live on a surface and can make a person sick for up to 2-8 hours. To help prevent transmission, all hard surfaces, such as doorknobs, refrigerator door handles, telephones, and bathroom surfaces, should be washed with soap or detergent, rinsed with water and then disinfected and rinsed. Disinfectants are those with "registered disinfectant" on the label. If disinfectants are not available, use a chlorine bleach solution made by adding 1 tablespoon of bleach to a quart (4 cups) of water. Use a cloth to apply this to surfaces and then rinse them with water. Dispose of the used bleach solution and mix a fresh solution when repeating the cleaning process. Use sanitizer cloths to wipe electronic items (phones, computes, remote controls) that are touched often.

What can I do if my anxiety about the situation feels overwhelming?

Looking for information is healthy, but watching report after report about novel H1N1 influenza may be distressing, especially for children. Parents should limit children's news-watching, watch the news with their children, and talk to them about the events that are occurring.

Should I send my children to school?

Yes. There is no reason for anyone to keep their children at home unless they are sick.

For facts about influenza, and more information about novel H1N1 influenza, please visit the Connecticut Flu Watch Website at www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch.

Upcoming Training & Exercise

Oct 14	Initial Law Enforcement Response to Suicide Bombing Attacks - POSTC
Oct 19 & Nov 3	Emergency Planning for Schools Workshop (2 day workshop) - Litchfield - DEMHS
Oct 21 & Nov 4	Emergency Planning for Schools Workshop (2 day workshop) - Hampton - DEMHS
Oct 20-22	Emergency Response to Domestic Biological Incidents - Brainard - DEMHS
Oct 27	BioTerrorism Awareness (AWR-118) - Brainard - DEMHS
Oct 29 } Nov 23 }	Emergency Management WebEOC Training—State EOC, Hartford—DEMHS

For training & exercise questions contact the Training Unit at 860-256-0840. Fax: 860-706-5539 or email: Training.demhs@ct.gov

You may register for these courses as listed at: www.ct.gov/demhs; or through POSTC at www.ct.gov/post; or through the CT Fire Academy (CFCA) at www.ct.gov/cfca.

When is it expected that the novel H1N1 vaccine will be available?

The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available by the first week of October.

Do I have to get the novel H1N1 vaccine?

You do not have to get the vaccine. The novel H1N1 vaccine will be voluntary, which means that you will only get the vaccine if you want it. It is recommended that people get the vaccine to protect them from the novel H1N1 flu.

Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the novel H1N1 flu?

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel H1N1 flu. You should get both vaccines this season to protect you against both viruses.

Where can I get the vaccine?

You should contact your health care provider to ask if they will be getting the novel H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. If you do not have a health care provider, but would like to get the vaccine, you should contact your local health department or district responsible for coordinating and organizing vaccination sites in your community. You can find that local health department or district by going to www.ct.gov/dph/mda or by calling 211.



How much does the vaccine cost? There is no cost for the vaccine itself – it's being provided free-of-charge by the federal government; however, private health care providers may charge an administrative fee to give you the vaccine, which is covered by most medical insurance plans.

Who should get the novel H1N1 vaccine?

We expect that there will be a limited supply of vaccine when it first becomes available. Certain groups of people should get the vaccine first because they are most at risk for novel H1N1 flu. These target groups include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, health-care and emergency medical services personnel who work directly with patients, people between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people aged 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems. As more vaccine is made, it will become available to those people who are not in the target groups. Current studies show that people who are over the age of 65 are less likely to get novel H1N1 than younger people. Once there is more vaccine, people over the age of 65 should get the vaccine as well.

Are there some people who should not get the novel H1N1 vaccine?

Yes, people who have a severe (life-threatening) allergy to chicken eggs or to any other substance in the vaccine should not be vaccinated.

Why does CDC recommend that pregnant women get the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine? It is important for a pregnant woman to get the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine as well as a seasonal influenza vaccine. A pregnant woman who gets any type of flu is at risk for serious complications and hospitalization. Many pregnant women who are otherwise healthy have become very sick by the novel H1N1 influenza virus. Compared to other people, more pregnant women who get the novel H1N1 influenza virus have been hospitalized and very sick. While hand washing, staying away from sick people, and other steps can help to protect pregnant women from the flu, getting the vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu.

H1N1 Influenza Hotline 1-800-830-9426

At the direction of the Honorable Governor M. Jodi Rell, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has opened a state-wide H1N1 Flu Hotline. The hotline, which started on Monday, October 5, 2009, is designed to answer basic, general questions about the H1N1 flu virus, and the vaccine distribution plan currently being rolled out in the state.

On its first day, the center took 273 calls from the general public, ranging from "Where may I get the H1N1 vaccine?" (A: Check with your health care provider) to "Do the symptoms of H1N1 flu differ from those of seasonal flu?" (A: No, they don't). Constituents with questions about personal health concerns, such as whether or not an individual or their family member may receive the H1N1 vaccine, were referred to their personal health care providers, as H1N1 hotline operators neither diagnose illness, nor dispense medical advice. The H1N1 Flu Hotline is currently open from 7 AM - 7 PM, Monday through Friday.

September 10th Governor's H1N1 Summit

Connecticut residents most at risk for the H1N1 (swine) flu virus will be among the first to receive the vaccine once it become available under the state's distribution plan for the H1N1 vaccine, Governor M. Jodi Rell announced at the H1N1 Summit.

The state distribution was one of the topics featured in a summit on the H1N1 virus that the Governor convened for Thursday, September 10, 2009 at the Connecticut Convention Center. The summit updated municipal officials and others on steps Connecticut has in place to address potential outbreaks of the H1N1 virus at the state and local levels.

"Our plan will ensure that available supplies of the H1N1 vaccine go to those at greatest risk first and in a timely fashion," Governor Rell said. "Common sense prevention, education and vaccination are essential tools in helping us combat outbreaks of the swine flu in schools, in the workplace and at home."

The Governor said a vaccine for seasonal influenza will also be available this fall.

"It is important to remember that the H1N1 vaccine is only effective against that virus. We strongly encourage Connecticut residents to get their seasonal flu shot as well this season," Governor Rell said.



CERT Weekend 2009 - September 26 & 27



Governor Rell: State Begins Receiving First Shipments of H1N1 Vaccine

*More than 20,000 Doses of Nasal Spray Arriving;
Second Shipment Next Week to Include Injectable Vaccine*

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced that an initial shipment of more than 20,000 doses of the intranasal H1N1 vaccine has begun to arrive in the state and another 20,000 doses, which will include the injectable variety, are due in Connecticut next week.

“These first doses will help us begin protecting those most at risk – our children,” Governor Rell said. “Pediatricians are among the first to receive these doses and we are very encouraged that much more of the vaccine is on the way to protect every member of the family.”

The vaccine is being distributed directly to those providers who have placed orders with the state Department of Public Health.

The state expects to receive more than 500,000 doses of both the injectable and intranasal H1N1 vaccines by mid-October and then several thousand more in weekly shipments thereafter. The Governor will receive an update on vaccine availability and distribution from federal officials later today.

The intranasal vaccine is federally approved for healthy people 2 to 49 years of age but is most effective in children. The state Department of Public Health (DPH), in accordance with the state H1N1 vaccination distribution plan, advises that the first shipments of the intranasal vaccine be used for healthy children 2-4, who are at greater risk for severe illness if they contract the H1N1 or the so-called swine flu.

The first round of vaccine is also being made available to vaccinate caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age and hospital healthcare workers and Emergency Medical Services personnel with direct patient contact.

The state Department of Public Health says that some of the more than 1,600 providers who have registered with DPH have begun receiving their orders for the intranasal vaccines. The second round of vaccine, which will include the injectable vaccine, will expand the priority groups to include pregnant women and people under the age of 18 with high-risk medical conditions.

“People who belong to these priority groups should contact their healthcare provider to find if their provider will be getting the vaccine. If somebody does not have a healthcare provider or if their provider is not getting the vaccine they should call the H1N1 Hotline at 800-830-9426,” DPH Commissioner Dr. J. Robert Galvin said. “It is important that people understand that the vaccine is just now beginning to arrive into the state and we expect to receive more vaccine every week. People may need to be patient and persistent to get the vaccine in these early rounds of vaccine supply.”

Once the bulk of the vaccine arrives, it will first be made available to the following high risk groups: pregnant women, caregivers of children younger than age of six months, health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact, children aged six months to four years and children aged 5 to 18 with chronic medical conditions.

At the Governor’s direction, DPH has set up a number of outlets for the public and providers to get information on the vaccine:

H1N1 hotline – **800-830-9426**.
www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch

Doctors and other health care providers interesting in registering with the DPH to place orders for the vaccine can get information at:

www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/providers or call **860-509-7929**.

The H1N1 vaccine is only effective against the H1N1 virus and does not protect against seasonal influenza. Public health officials also encourage Connecticut residents to get their seasonal flu vaccination, as well as the H1N1 vaccination.