

Ulster County Weekly H1N1 Update - Summary Released: 25 –Nov. 09

- The overall level of influenza-like illness (ILI) reported by health care providers, Emergency Departments and Schools in Ulster County have decreased slightly when compared to last week.
- Nationally, visits to doctors for influenza-like-illness declined from last week, but are still higher than expected for this time of year. Flu-related hospitalizations and deaths declined slightly, but are still very high nation-wide compared to what is expected for this time of year.
- While influenza is unpredictable, high levels of flu activity may continue for several weeks, and even after flu activity peaks, it's possible that other waves of influenza activity may occur – caused by either 2009 H1N1 viruses or regular seasonal flu viruses.
- Influenza season typically goes from December to May. Nothing is typical about this year's influenza season.
- Reports from New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) indicate that the manufactures of seasonal vaccine are beginning to ship to those Health Care Providers (HCP) who have previously ordered vaccine and did not receive their full allotment. Please keep in touch with your HCP.
- The 2009 H1N1 vaccine supply continues to increase among Ulster County HCP.
- NYSDOH reports larger amounts of H1N1 vaccine are anticipated to be released in late-December and early January.
- The Ulster County Health Department plans to offer free H1N1 vaccinations at five locations throughout the county the week of December 14-18th.
- Public Information: Past Infections and Vaccination Q & A
- Holiday Travel – Tips for staying healthy during holiday gatherings.

For additional information about H1N1 and updates, visit our website at: www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health or call seasonal flu hotline: **340-3093**. Also visit <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/> to see if there are any flu vaccine clinics scheduled at retail outlets near you or call NYS DOH Hotline 1-800-808-1987.

**Ulster County Health Department
Seasonal and H1N1 Influenza Advisory
Update 11/25/09**

Influenza Monitoring:

The overall level of influenza-like illness (ILI) reported by health care providers, Emergency Departments and Schools in Ulster County have decreased slightly when compared to last week. Emergency Departments continue to report a slight decline in visits since last week due to ILI. While most people with ILI or flu in Ulster County are experiencing mild to moderate illness, a small number of those hospitalized in Ulster County are experiencing more severe illness or complications caused by the flu. Schools have reported rates between 5-10% of absenteeism this week which is similar to last week. In previous pandemics there have been waves of illness making the timing, spread and severity of influenza unpredictable. Outbreaks may occur in waves at different places at different times. Ulster County Health Department (UCHD) is continuing to monitor influenza activity on a daily basis.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) almost all of the influenza viruses identified so far this season have been 2009 H1N1 influenza A viruses. Forty-three states are reporting widespread influenza activity. That is down from 46 states the previous week. Nationally, visits to doctors for influenza-like-illness declined from last week, but are still higher than expected for this time of year. Flu-related hospitalizations and deaths declined slightly, but are still very high nation-wide compared to what is expected for this time of year.

While influenza is unpredictable, high levels of flu activity may continue for several weeks, and even after flu activity peaks, it's possible that other waves of influenza activity may occur – caused by either 2009 H1N1 viruses or regular seasonal flu viruses. Influenza season typically goes from December to May. Nothing is typical about this year's influenza season.

Status of Prevention Efforts:

Flu Vaccination Information:

Seasonal Flu Vaccine: Reports from New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) indicate that the manufactures of seasonal vaccine are beginning to ship to those Health Care Providers (HCP) who have previously ordered vaccine and did not receive their full allotment. Please keep in touch with your HCP.

H1N1 Vaccine: At this time, your own HCP may be the best option for getting vaccinated. The 2009 H1N1 vaccine supply continues to increase among Ulster County HCP. We're not where we want to be, but available vaccine is being quickly ordered and shipped and we are in better shape today than we were a couple weeks ago. NYSDOH reports larger amounts of H1N1 vaccine are anticipated to be released in late-December and early January.

Community Vaccination Clinics: The Ulster County Health Department plans to offer free H1N1 vaccinations at five locations throughout the county the week of December 14-18th. We anticipate starting with two locations and if vaccine supplies remain adequate, further sites will be announced. The announcement will be available on the flu hotline 340-3093 and website www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health.

Clinics are for high-risk persons ONLY:

- Pregnant women;
- Residents age 6 months to 24 years old;
- People who live with or care for children younger than six months of age; and
- Residents age 25-64 who have a chronic medical condition (such as asthma, lung, heart, liver, or kidney disease, diabetes, neurological conditions, neuromuscular disorders and persons with a weakened immune system)
- Health care workers and EMS

When it is determined that most high-risk people have been vaccinated, others will be able to get immunized.

Where to Find Vaccine: If your provider has not ordered H1N1 vaccine, and does not plan to order H1N1 vaccine, call the Ulster County Health Department Flu Hotline at 845-340-3093 or log onto www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health to get updated information about when vaccination clinics for the general public will be held. You can also check <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/> to see if there are any flu vaccine clinics scheduled at pharmacies and retail outlets near you.

In addition, the New York State Department of Health has developed the *Flu Vaccination Clinics in New York State webpage*, where the public can click on a county and find more information about where to get seasonal and H1N1 vaccinations. The site is: http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/vaccination_clinics/

Public Information: Past Infections and Vaccination Q & A:

Do I need to be vaccinated if I had Influenza A (swine flu) in 1976? Yes. The 1976 swine flu virus and the 2009 H1N1 virus are different. It's unlikely a person vaccinated in 1976 will have full protection from the 2009 H1N1 virus. People vaccinated in 1976 should still be given the H1N1 vaccine now if they are in the target groups specified by the CDC.

Do I need to have the H1N1 vaccine if I had laboratory confirmed H1N1 flu this year? No, however, if you are given the H1N1 flu vaccine by accident, no adverse outcomes are to be expected.

Should the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine be given to someone who has had an influenza-like illness between April and now? Do I need a test to know if I need the vaccine or not? It is not necessary to test a person who previously had an influenza-like illness.

People for whom the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is recommended should receive it, even if they have had an influenza-like illness previously, unless they can be certain they had H1N1 flu based on a laboratory test that can specifically detect 2009 H1N1 viruses. CDC recommends that persons who were tested for H1N1 flu discuss this issue with a HCP. There is no harm in being vaccinated if you had H1N1 flu in the past.

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/frequently_asked_questions/vaccine.htm#past_infections

More information about the flu is available at www.nyhealth.gov and www.flu.gov.

Holiday Travel – Tips for staying healthy during holiday gatherings:

One of the most important things that people can do is to travel only when feeling well.

- People with the flu or flu-like illness should wait to travel until at least 24 hours after their fever has subsided without using fever-reducing medicines.
- If people get sick while traveling, they should postpone traveling home until well.
- The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

Take these steps to protect your health and the health of those you take care of:

- Avoid close contact (within 6 feet away) with sick people as much as possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and teach children and others how to properly wash their hands.
- Encourage people around you to fully cover their mouth and nose with disposable tissues when they cough or sneeze. If they don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend (crook) of the arm (inside of the elbow) or into their shirt sleeves.