



Grant County Health District – Always Working for a Healthier and Safer Grant County

Ephrata Office County Courthouse
PO Box 37, Ephrata, WA 98823
509-754-6060

Moses Lake Office
1038 West Ivy Suite 1, Moses Lake WA 98837
509-766-7960

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10/08/2009 TO: Grant County: -Healthcare Providers - EMS Providers -Long Term Care Facilities -Grant County Healthcare Emergencies Alliance	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT Alexander Brzezny, MD, MPH, Grant County Health Officer Peggy Grigg, RN, BSN, Director of Personal Health Services/Administrator
--	---

Public Health Alert

Purpose of this alert is to share information regarding:

- Current reported influenza activity in Grant County.
- Current school and healthcare worker influenza-like illness surveillance.
- Definition of who's a healthcare worker and clarification on work exclusion.
- 2009 H1N1 vaccine availability and nasal spray utilization in healthcare workers.

CURRENT INFLUENZA ACTIVITY IN GRANT COUNTY

Since September 1, 275 positive *influenza A* results have been reported to Grant County Health District, with rates increasing weekly. Because these reports are not mandatory, and not all influenza-like illnesses (ILI) are tested, actual numbers of patients being seen in our health care system are presumed to be much higher. Healthcare facilities are also reporting a sharp increase in the number of patients being seen for ILI.

An emergency rule (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/246-101-emgyrule.pdf>) recently enacted by Washington State, healthcare workers and hospitals makes the following immediately reportable to local public health (Grant County Health District: 509-766-7960, after hours: 509-398-2083).

- 1) Hospitalized patients with laboratory-confirmed influenza infection of any type,
- 2) Deceased patients with laboratory-confirmed influenza infection of any type, and
- 3) Deceased patients and critically ill patients (i.e., admitted to ICU) suspected to have influenza infection.

Since September 1, 2009, a total of 10 cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza have been confirmed. Eleven Grant County residents have been hospitalized for (any) influenza, 6 of which are included in the 10 confirmed to be 2009 H1N1 virus, with 2 tests for hospitalized patients pending. 2 confirmed H1N1 cases were in non-hospitalized pregnant women.

The Grant County Health Officer advises healthcare providers that influenza testing is less valuable at this time because indicators show that the influenza outbreak is well established in our community. Recommendations for treatment will not differ based on rapid test results.

UPDATE ON SCHOOL AND HEALTHCARE INFLUENZA LIKE ILLNESS SURVEILLANCE.

Nine schools in five school districts in Grant County, have student ILI rates of 10% or greater. Some schools have had several staff ill as well.

Healthcare Worker ILI

Some healthcare facilities have reported increasing numbers of healthcare workers with ILI.

- **We are requesting that healthcare facilities report to the Health District healthcare worker ILI absenteeism of 10% or greater.**
- For surveillance purposes we've implemented a weekly reporting system for healthcare worker illness rates with select healthcare facilities.
- Healthcare worker illness levels may necessitate the implementation of triage protocols (attached).

Definition of Healthcare Worker

Healthcare worker (HCW): *Any employee in a healthcare facility who has close contact (6 feet) with patients, patient-care areas, or patient-care items;* also referred to as "healthcare personnel."

Emergency response /medical services worker (EMS): Any employee performing pre-hospital emergency care to patients, or fire service and law enforcement acting as a first responder with a close contact (6 feet) with patients, patient-care areas, or patient-care items.

Exclusion Policy

7 days of exclusion applies to all individuals falling into above HCW / EMS definition: If a person who fulfills above characteristics at the time of symptoms onset becomes ill with ILI (as defined by CDC) then such individual needs to stay home for at least 7 days or until temperature <100F for 24hours (without meds) ***whichever is later*** if planning to return to HCW or EMS duties.

A person could be returned to a workplace sooner only when temperature <100F for 24hours (without meds) and only if placed into a position not characterized by above "Healthcare worker" definition (usually outside of 6 feet of contacts with patients).

Triage Protocol

Please evaluate your facility triage protocols. We'd like to remind you of the SORT TRIAGE protocols to consider from Kaiser Permanente of Colorado; CDC WILL NOT be preparing triage protocols. (See attached.)

2009 H1N1 VACCINE AVAILABILITY, NASAL SPRAY UTILIZATION IN HEALTHCARE WORKERS.

Our recommendations will not differ from those of CDC; H1N1 nasal spray ***is appropriate*** for most workplaces, except that anyone in close contact with a person with a severely weakened immune system, (requiring care in a protected environment, such as a bone marrow transplant unit), should not get the H1N1 nasal spray.

Chemotherapy /oncology staff could be addressed on case by case basis by the respective medical doctors in their departments. At this time, we are not recommending time away from patient care duties following receipt of the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine.

We are expecting our first small shipment of nasal spray vaccine early next week. Nasal spray will be the only presentation of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine initially received in Grant County. Grant County Health District is encouraging all eligible, (healthy people age 2-49 years of age, who are not pregnant) healthcare workers to consider the nasal spray. This can be obtained for use in your facility through the Health District by contacting Belia McPartland, RN, at 509-766-7960.

When a sufficient amount of vaccine becomes available the vaccine prioritization will likely be suspended and everyone else will be encouraged to get the vaccine. For the most current information on the 2009 H1N1 virus and vaccine availability please visit www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1/default.htm.

Attached:

- GCHD media release regarding the influenza outbreak in Grant County.
- Kaiser SORT triage protocols
- Sacred Heart Medical Center – Employee triage

###