



Otago
District Health Board
Poari Hauora-ā-rohe ki Ōtāgo



Southland District
HEALTH BOARD
Te Poari Hauora o te Rohe o Murihiku

**To: Staff at Otago and Southland District Health Boards
External Stakeholders**

Advisory 13 – 23 June 2009 at 14.30hrs

**From: District Health Board Incident Controller Leanne Samuel
Subject: Novel Influenza A (H1N1)**

Note:

1: This advisory remains current until the situation changes or new information is made available.

2: All clinical teams please collect this information and subsequent information in folders. Department heads please print this information and make it visible e.g. on staff notice boards.

In the last few days there have been a number of important changes as the Novel A Influenza virus epidemic becomes more established in New Zealand. The Ministry of Health has now moved to a 'manage it' phase as community transmission is confirmed in many parts of the country. This means the emphasis changes from containment, to identifying and looking after those most at risk of serious illness and preventing further spread.

Most people who get sick with novel Influenza A are expected to recover without antiviral medication and many will not need to seek medical care.

In Otago and Southland we have had no laboratory confirmed cases and sentinel general practice surveillance shows that levels of community illness are similar to usual for this time of year. Although General Practice teams say few people are reporting flu-like illness, it is inevitable that cases of the new virus will be identified.

We will ask those who are notified as having influenza like illness to isolate themselves at home until they are better.

The following actions are being undertaken.

Border management

- In-flight announcements providing advice about symptoms and how to access health care if needed will continue on international flights
- Public Health staff will continue to meet international flights at airport health stations to provide information and advice to inbound passengers
- Passenger locator forms are no longer being completed, as contact tracing of confirmed cases stops

General Practice now has the key role in managing novel Influenza A

- Most people will recover at home without the need for a GP visit
- However your family doctor remains the first point of contact if you become sick and need to seek help. Please phone ahead first
- Please remember to keep the hospital emergency departments for emergencies only

Telephone advice

- Phone the **National** toll-free Healthline on 0800 611 116.

Otago – Southland toll-free healthline

- This will be set up to support family doctors and ensure hospitals can care for patients once the workload in general practice becomes too great
- Experienced health practitioners will be able to provide phone advice and direct people to appropriate care if necessary.

Community-Based Assessment Centres (CBACs)

- The District Health Boards are preparing to establish these if necessary, should the workload in general practice become too great
- Experienced health practitioners will provide assessment and management of influenza cases only from these centres
- The location of CBACs will be advised should they need to open

Public hospital services

We could need to rationalise services if many staff and many people in the community are ill.

For patients:

- The aim is to minimise disruption to services
- We may need to reduce non-urgent services
- Visitor restrictions to hospitals may apply
- Visitors will be asked to stay away if unwell

For staff:

- If you report in sick you will be asked if you have influenza-like illness
This helps gauge levels of community illness
- You may be asked to work in a different area if services come under pressure.
- You will be expected to adhere to organisational policies especially around sickness, infection prevention and control and security

Many other planning activities are taking place. These include isolation cascades, Emergency Department plans to expand and manage increased flows, staff education, tools to help staff to determine if symptoms are influenza-like illness or common cold, triggers for enhanced cleaning and hand gel stations . . . the list goes on.

How can you help?

- Most people with H1N1 will be able to be cared for at home
- Please think about your preparations for staying home for up to a week while you are sick. A staff pocket card to provide information on keeping safe in a pandemic is being prepared to support staff.

Useful information including the contents for a basic emergency kit can be found inside the back cover of the Yellow Pages in the phone book, or on the Civil Defence web site www.getthru.govt.nz

Globally there are over 44,000 confirmed cases of pandemic Influenza A (H1N1) internationally, including 180 deaths.

In New Zealand there are more than 350 confirmed cases of H1N1 and more than 700 suspected cases.