



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



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

Influenza A (H1N1)

Media Update No 15

23 June 2009 at 15.40 hrs

In the last few days there have been a number important changes as the Influenza A (H1N1) virus becomes more established in New Zealand, says Otago and Southland Medical Officer of Health Dr Derek Bell.

"The Ministry of Health has now moved to a 'manage it' phase as community transmission is confirmed in many parts of the country," he said. This means the emphasis changes from containment, to identifying and looking after those most at risk of serious illness and delaying further spread. Most people who get sick with Influenza A (H1N1) 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 general practice surveillance shows that levels of community illness are similar to usual for this time of year," said Dr Bell. Although General Practice teams say few people are reporting flu-like illness, as influenza numbers increase it is inevitable that some will be due to the new influenza virus. "

"We will ask those who have influenza to avoid infecting other people by staying away from work, or school and other gatherings until they are well again."

The following actions are being undertaken in Otago and Southland

Community-Based Assessment Centres (CBACs)

The District Health boards are preparing to establish Community Based Assessment Centres in case family doctors become overwhelmed with the numbers of patients with influenza-like illness. Experienced health practitioners will provide assessment and management of influenza cases from these centres. The location of CBACs will be advised should they need to open.

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 medical treatment
- 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.

How can you help?

- Most people with non-seasonal influenza 'swine flu' 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.

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

For further information, please contact: SDHB Communications Officer Jo Harvey on 027 674 1758.