



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

May 6, 2009

Dear Physician,

As cases of 2009 influenza A (H1N1) virus infection becomes more widespread in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is transitioning to using a reporting system similar to that used for seasonal flu. As you may be aware, during influenza season, activity levels are used to monitor spread of illness through a surveillance system rather than counting individual cases.

The Virginia Department of Health has provided the following guidance to assist clinicians in making decisions regarding testing and treatment of individuals presenting with influenza-like illness. Clinicians should utilize these new guidelines in concert with their clinical judgment in evaluating patients.

For patients presenting with fever (100° F or greater) and respiratory infection symptoms (cough, sore throat or rhinorrhea – at least two of these) or with sepsis-like syndrome:

- **Treatment** – Assess if the patient is at high-risk for complications from influenza. If so, early treatment with antiviral medications is recommended. If patient is not in a high-risk group, follow CDC guidance on antiviral recommendations at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>. Please keep in mind that excessive use of antivirals may lead to resistance, rendering it useless in the future.
- **Isolation** – Encourage the patient to stay at home for 7 days after the onset of illness or at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved (whichever is longer). If the ill person must go out into the community (e.g., for medical care) he/she should wear a face mask. It is recommended that a single household family member be designated as the ill person's caregiver. Recommendations can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/mitigation.htm>
- **Infection Control** – Appropriate infection control measures should be implemented whether the patient is isolated at home or in a healthcare facility. http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm
- **Contacts** – Evaluate close contacts for the presence of conditions that put them at high-risk for complications for influenza. Advise them to remain at home *at the earliest sign of illness* and minimize contact in the community to the extent possible. Recommend antiviral chemoprophylaxis for those **at high-risk for complications or in other special circumstances**. <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>
- **Specimen Collection** – Consider specimen collection for patients who meet the above clinical criteria and:
 - Require hospitalization; or
 - Appear to be associated with a cluster of respiratory illness in a group setting (e.g., school, college, daycare, or long term care facility)

Fairfax County Health Department
10777 Main Street, Suite 203, Fairfax, VA 22030
Phone: 703-246-2479 TTY: 703-591-6435
Fax: 703-273-0825
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd



If a specimen is collected, please contact the Health Department's Communicable Diseases Unit at 703-246-2433 to obtain a patient tracking number and to arrange transfer of specimen to the state lab (DCLS). You may also call the same number if you require further information.

The Health Department has a Self Care Guide, posters on respiratory etiquette and hand washing, and other useful information for your office and patients at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/flu/swineflu.htm>. This outbreak situation has evolved rapidly and we appreciate your flexibility and patience as the guidance changes yet again. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ayensu, MD

Gloria Addo-Ayensu, MD, MPH
Director of Health