

Health Advisory: Flu and Oseltamivir

Minnesota Department of Health, Fri, Dec 16 10:00 CST 2022

Action Steps

Local and tribal health department: Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, travel clinics, and convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

Hospitals, clinics and other facilities: Please forward to pediatricians, occupational health and employee health leadership, infection preventionists, infectious disease physicians, emergency department staff, hospitalists, primary care clinicians, pharmacists, and all other health care providers who might see patients with respiratory illness.

Health care providers:

- Consider influenza high on the list of possible diagnoses for patients with respiratory symptoms; influenza activity is high in Minnesota and nationwide with parallel high levels of hospitalizations, deaths, and outbreaks.
- Use resources below to find generic oseltamivir if you are experiencing shortages
- Follow CDC guidance to prioritize antiviral treatment of influenza according to [CDC Interim Guidance for Clinicians to Prioritize Antiviral Treatment of Influenza in the Setting of Reduced Availability of Oseltamivir \(https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/pdf/CDC_HAN_482.pdf\)](https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/pdf/CDC_HAN_482.pdf)
- Test for influenza virus in patients with influenza-like illness (ILI) to help guide use of antiviral treatment. Also consider testing for other differential diagnosis such as COVID-19 in patients with respiratory illness, and RSV as clinically indicated.
- Promote influenza vaccine to all eligible persons aged 6 months and older. Influenza vaccine uptake in Minnesota is lagging behind the previous 2 years.
- Encourage other prevention strategies: hand washing with soap and water or alcohol based sanitizers, covering your cough, staying home when sick, and consider wearing a mask, particularly in public indoor settings

Background

Seasonal influenza activity is high across the United States as well as in Minnesota. In Minnesota, there has already been >50 deaths and over 2,300 individuals hospitalized for influenza. Additionally, influenza-like illness has contributed to approximately 40 outbreaks in LTC facilities and 900 outbreaks in schools. Vaccination, antivirals, and other prevention strategies all have an important role in preventing and reducing the severity of influenza. Vaccination, antivirals, and other prevention strategies all have an important role in preventing and reducing the severity of influenza. This is especially important given the state is also seeing higher levels of RSV and COVID-19.

Unfortunately, Minnesota has seen a significant decrease this year in influenza vaccine uptake even though the vaccine is well matched for circulating strains. Current uptake of influenza vaccine in Minnesota is low. Please discuss the importance of getting vaccinated with your patients; the strongest influence on patient vaccine uptake is a strong recommendation from their clinician. The vaccine provides protection against 4 influenza viruses, so patients are encouraged to get vaccinated even if they have been infected this year. There are a variety of vaccines available including 3 that are targeted specifically for patients 65 years and older.

Antiviral treatment also plays an important role in the prevention and control of influenza, especially those that have severe disease or are at risk for severe disease, including, hospitalization, and death from influenza. Those at highest risk include older adults, very young children, pregnant people, and those with certain chronic conditions. The clinical benefit of antiviral treatment of influenza is greatest when treatment is started early (within 2 days of illness onset) in people with mild, uncomplicated illness. Oseltamivir treatment also is recommended as soon as possible for suspected or confirmed influenza requiring hospitalization, and to help control institutional influenza

outbreaks, particularly in long-term care facilities. Information on oseltamivir and on other influenza antiviral medications can be found here: [CDC: Influenza Antiviral Medications: Summary for Clinicians \(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm)

Finding Generic Oseltamivir

MDH as well as CDC have received anecdotal reports of reduced availability for *generic* oseltamivir. To address these spot shortages, you can use the following resources:

- Finding Oseltamivir:
 - Reach out to partnering pharmacies or health care facilities.
 - Check with other distributors of oseltamivir: [FDA Availability of Antiviral Medications \(https://www.fda.gov/media/120654/download\)](https://www.fda.gov/media/120654/download)
- Prioritizing Oseltamivir
 - Review CDC Health Advisory for guidance on prioritizing oseltamivir for treatment among hospitalized patients, in outpatient settings, and in institutional settings (such as long-term care facilities, etc...). Further details can be found at [CDC Interim Guidance for Clinicians to Prioritize Antiviral Treatment of Influenza in the Setting of Reduced Availability of Oseltamivir \(https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/pdf/CDC_HAN_482.pdf\)](https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/pdf/CDC_HAN_482.pdf)

In order to reduce the impact of influenza on our community and to ensure resources are available to our most vulnerable, vaccination as well as other prevention strategies must be strongly encouraged by health care providers.

Current Influenza Situation in Minnesota

To stay current on Influenza trends in Minnesota please see:

- [MDH: Weekly Influenza and Respiratory Disease Report for current influenza activity in Minnesota: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/stats/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/stats/index.html)
- [MDH: Influenza Home Page: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/index.html](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/index.html)
- [MDH: Influenza Vaccine Information: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/hcp/vaccine/index.html](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/hcp/vaccine/index.html)

For More Information

- CDC. [Information for Clinicians on Influenza Virus Testing \(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/index.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/index.htm)
- CDC. [Influenza Antiviral Medications: Summary for Clinicians \(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm)
- CDC. [Interim Guidance for Influenza Outbreak Management in Long-Term Care and Post-Acute Care Facilities \(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm)
- CDC. [Testing and Management Considerations for Nursing Home Residents with Acute Respiratory Illness Symptoms when SARS-CoV-2 and Influenza Viruses are Co-circulating \(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/testing-management-considerations-nursinghomes.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/testing-management-considerations-nursinghomes.htm)

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network \(http://www.health.state.mn.us/han\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/han)

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.