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Novel Influenza A (H1N1) update

Stanton~ The name may have changed yet again, but the threat remains the same. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there have been more than 1 million cases of Novel Influenza A, formerly referred to as H1N1, since the novel strain first emerged in the United States in April and anticipates an increase in the number of cases this fall. The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) is working in partnership with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), school partners and local health care providers to assure a coordinated and effective response to this very fluid situation.

Similar to seasonal flu, someone infected with Novel Influenza A may experience fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue, as well as diarrhea and vomiting. And just like seasonal flu, it can be severe and potentially deadly.

There are some common sense things we can all do to help prevent the spread of seasonal and Novel Influenza A, including:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Cough into a tissue or your sleeve, not in your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth as germs are spread this way.
- Anyone with influenza-like illness should remain at home at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or higher), without the use of fever reducers.

MMDHD expects to receive the first shipment of Novel Influenza A vaccine in mid-October and will work with health care providers to vaccinate the following target groups, per the CDC's recommendations:

- Pregnant women- due to higher risk of complications and potential protection to their infants.
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months- younger infants are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated.
- Health care and emergency services personnel- infections among health care workers may be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients.
- People 6 months through 24 years of age.
- People ages 25 through 64 years with certain health conditions such as asthma or diabetes.

At this time the CDC is not recommending people over the age of 64 be vaccinated for Novel Influenza A because they seem to have some immunity to the disease and they have not been among those most affected. Once the target groups have been vaccinated, it is anticipated the vaccine will be offered to those who wish to receive it.

The Novel Influenza A vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine. Everyone is highly encouraged to receive the seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as it is available.

For more information on seasonal influenza or Novel Influenza A, please call MMDHD at 989-831-5237 or visit www.mmdhd.org.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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