

H1N1 Virus Update –August 31, 2009

Each week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) compiles information about influenza disease activity in the United States. Illness associated with the H1N1 virus (formerly called the “Swine flu”) has continued through the summer months. More illness is anticipated this fall and winter. As of August 19, there have been 1,946 laboratory-confirmed cases among Connecticut residents. One hundred and thirty six CT residents have been hospitalized for H1N1 related illnesses and nine people have died. There have been 44 confirmed cases in Bristol and four in Burlington.

Visits to health care providers for influenza-like illness (ILI) were highest in February during the 2008-09 flu season, but rose again in April 2009 after the new H1N1 virus emerged. Current visits for influenza-like illness are down from April, but are higher than what is expected in the summer. In most parts of the county, the numbers of cases have been stable, though the Southeast is reporting an increase.

Total influenza hospitalization rates for adults and children are similar to or lower than seasonal influenza hospitalization rates (depending on the age group). The proportion of deaths attributed to influenza was low and within the limits of what is expected in the summer months.

The H1N1 vaccine is currently in production. It appears that it will be ready for the public sometime in the fall/winter of this year. A shortage of the vaccine is not expected, but availability and demand are often unpredictable. The CDC has indicated however that there is a possibility that – at least initially – the vaccine will be available in limited quantities.

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health will be working with the local health departments/districts to determine how the vaccine will be distributed. Once this information is available, the Bristol-Burlington Health District (BBHD) will inform its residents.

The CDC is concerned that the new H1N1 flu virus will result in a particularly severe flu season this year. While the seasonal flu vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against the H1N1 influenza, it is intended to be used in addition to the new vaccine. The Bristol-Burlington Health District has scheduled three seasonal flu vaccine clinics for the fall. The first one will be at the Burlington Town Hall on October 6. On October 7 and October 20, seasonal flu vaccination clinics will be held at the Douglas Beals Senior Center in Bristol. In the next few weeks, details about the clinics will be available on the BBHD website and in area newspapers.

More information about the H1N1 virus can also be found on the following websites:

<http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/site/default.asp> (Connecticut Department of Public Health)

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

<http://www.who.int/en/> (World Health Organization)

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