

H1N1 INFLUENZA 09 (HUMAN SWINE INFLUENZA) UPDATE #8
GENERAL PRACTITIONER and ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICES: 19 June 2009
 Please distribute to all practice staff

Key points

- 1. NSW Health will provide GPs and AMSs with free anti-influenza medication to treat eligible patients.**
- 2. A clinical assessment algorithm has been developed to guide clinicians in the use of the anti-influenza medications distributed by NSW Health for patients with influenza-like illness.**
- 3. The distribution of anti-influenza medications and surgical masks from NSW Health will commence from Monday 22 June 2009.**
- 4. Interim arrangements have been put in place to ensure eligible patients can access anti-influenza medications in the period before GPs and AMSs receive their first delivery.**

On 17 June 2009, NSW moved to a new response phase, 'PROTECT', which is tailored to the moderate level of risk posed by the new virus. A key element of this response is to provide early anti-influenza treatment to vulnerable groups. NSW Health will provide GPs and AMSs with free anti-influenza medication to treat eligible patients.

What are the conditions on the use of stockpile medication?

To ensure appropriate use of the national medical stockpile, the Australian Government has placed a number of conditions on its use. These conditions include that all participating doctors agree to:

- follow the Australian Government criteria for use of stockpile medication
- keep an accurate record of the patients who receive free anti-influenza treatment
- be audited on the use of stockpile medication at any time in order to assess compliance.

A clinical assessment algorithm has been developed to guide clinicians in the use of the anti-influenza medications distributed by NSW Health for patients with influenza-like illness (attached)

When will I receive my allocation of anti-influenza medications and surgical masks from NSW Health?

General practices and AMSs that wish to receive anti-influenza medications and surgical masks should place an order with the State Vaccine Centre using the order form that can be found at www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/professionals/index.asp. The initial supply will include 50 courses of oseltamivir (Tamiflu), 5 courses of zanamivir (Relenza), and surgical masks. Distribution will commence from Monday 22 June 2009.

How can eligible patients access anti-influenza medication before I receive my first delivery?

Whilst your practice is awaiting delivery of medication you could:

- provide a **private prescription**, which the patient can have filled at normal cost
- use **local Area Health Service arrangements** for supply of medication to eligible patients, where you are aware of these local arrangements
- call the **NSW Health oseltamivir information line** (8am-10pm) – 02 9391 9836 – for information on current supply arrangements (please note, this is not a clinical advice line).

In all cases where you cannot supply anti-influenza treatment yourself, please provide your patient with a prescription to assist in dispensing the medication via these other mechanisms.

Other important points

Provide free anti-influenza treatment to **eligible patients only** (refer to the clinical assessment algorithm).

Laboratory testing for influenza is not required for patients to receive free anti-influenza treatment. Testing should only be performed in patients that require hospital admission, or where a test result could change your clinical management.

Free anti-influenza medication should **not be routinely provided for prophylaxis** of well household members. Generally, contacts at risk of severe illness should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms of influenza, and to present for early treatment if symptoms develop. Prophylaxis can be considered for those at very high risk of severe illness (e.g. bone marrow suppression).

Additional information will be provided with the first delivery of anti-influenza medication and surgical masks.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Dr Kerry Chant, Chief Health Officer and Deputy Director General – Population Health

For more information please visit our website: <http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/index.asp>

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