PUBLIC HEALTH BYTES

Henrico Health Department's Newsletter

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Working in partnership with the citizens of Henrico County to create the conditions for health.

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Pandemic Flu - ALERT PHASE WHO: 6

Pandemic Flu Alert Level Raised to 6

The WHO Director-General raised the Pandemic Alert Level to Phase 6 on June 11, 2009. "On the basis of available evidence, and these expert assessments of the evidence, the scientific criteria for an influenza pandemic have been met." "No previous pandemic has been detected so early or watched so closely, in real-time, right at the very beginning. The world can now reap the benefits of investments, over the last five years, in pandemic preparedness."
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html

Testing for Novel H1N1 in Virginia

As of 26 June, 244 cases of novel H1N1 have been confirmed in Virginia, with 9 cases confirmed in Henrico thus far. However, confirmed cases are only a small proportion of the total number of cases that are likely present in the community. In fact, the CDC estimates that 89% of all current flu activity is a result of infections with the novel H1N1. Therefore, VDH is recommending that all flu cases seen this summer be treated as infections with the novel H1N1, commonly referred to as "swine flu" (see below under Antiviral treatments for Influenza). Testing for novel H1N1 has been scaled back for the time being and will only be advised for patients with fever (l00° F or greater) and acute onset of respiratory infection symptoms (cough, sore throat or rhinorrhea) or with sepsis-like syndrome who (l) require hospitalization, OR (2) appear to be associated with a cluster of respiratory illness in a group setting (i.e. two or more cases in a nursing home, daycare, or similar settings). Testing through the state lab is not for individual diagnostic purposes but for public health surveillance. Quest Diagnostics/Focus Laboratories offers a commercial test for the novel H1N1 virus. Please See: http://www.questdiagnostics.com/patient/swineflu.html. Health care providers that have questions about testing patients outside the specified guidelines can contact the Henrico Epidemiology team at 501-4522.

Designated sentinel providers are collecting specimens from patients with influenza-like illness who are at high risk for complications or are healthcare workers. This testing approach will help us monitor for changes in circulating flu viruses.

Antiviral Treatments for Influenza

The results of influenza testing at the Virginia's public health laboratory indicate that the majority of flu virus currently circulating is the novel influenza A (H1N1). Therefore, it is recommended that all flu cases be treated as if they are novel influenza A (H1N1). Clinicians should use either oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®), for treatment and prophylaxis of close contacts who are at high risk for complications from the flu. Information about treatment and prophylaxis recommendations may be found at
http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm

H5N1 Avian Flu Update: In June Egypt has confirmed 2 additional human cases. In 2009, there have been at total of 38 human cases and 12 deaths worldwide, with a case fatality rate of 32%. Since 2003 there have been a total of 433 human cases worldwide including 262 deaths (case fatality rate = 60.1%). See www.who.int for more.

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Childhood Lead Reminder

The CDC recommends that all children should be tested for lead at 12 and 24 months of age. If a child lives in a high risk area, testing should begin at age 6 months. High risk zip codes in Henrico include 23226, 23227, 23229, 23230, and 23231. Children with venous lead levels of 10 ug/dL or greater should be reported to your local health department. Reports can be faxed to 804-501-4232. For more information see the Lead Safe Virginia Program website at www.vahealth.org/leadsafe/.

School Immunizations

Effective Oct 1, 2008, a complete series of 3 doses of HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine is required for females entering the 6th grade, with the first dose to be administered before the child enters the 6th grade. However, after reviewing educational materials approved by the Board of Health, the parent/guardian may elect for the child not to receive the HPV vaccine; no documentation is required if the parent chooses to opt out.

Effective July 1, 2006, a booster dose of Tdap vaccine is required for all children entering the 6th grade if at least five years have passed since the last dose of tetanus-containing vaccine. Students entering grades 6 through 9 in the fall of 2009 are required to have received the Tdap booster.

Henrico District Update

Henrico Health District announces the departure of Rebecca Early, the District Epidemiologist. After 3 years of dedicated service to Henrico County, Rebecca has taken a position at the VDH Division of Immunizations. We wish Rebecca the best of luck in her new position.

Emergency Preparedness

Mass Dispensing Drill: Henrico County conducted a test of the emergency medication distribution plan using Henrico Pharmacies on 6/28/09 at the CVS at 9501 Woodman Road. The exercise was highly successful and received very favorable media coverage. More importantly, the exercise provided some important lessons learned that will assist us in improving our plans for the future.

Henrico's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC): The MRC continues to seek volunteers to join the MRC. Please see http://www.co.henrico.va.us/health/mrc.html for more info.

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