



NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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PRESS RELEASE: H1N1 FLU UPDATE

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Lockport, NY -- Testing has confirmed that the recent death of an eastern Niagara County resident has been linked to a suspected case of H1N1 flu, the Niagara County Department of Health reported today. The death involved a middle aged adult with an underlying medical condition.

To protect the privacy of the family, no further information about the individual will be released. This is the first death in Niagara County that has been linked to H1N1 flu since the first H1N1 outbreak began in April. "Every death is a tragedy, and our sincere condolences are extended to the family at this difficult time," said Daniel J. Stapleton, Public Health Director.

Mr. Stapleton emphasized that the death does not mean the H1N1 virus has changed to cause more severe illness. "Most people with the flu continue to have mild to moderate symptoms and recover at home without medical treatment. Sadly, as with ordinary seasonal flu, the H1N1 flu can, and occasionally does, cause serious illness and death, especially to individuals with underlying medical risk factors."

Those at higher risk of serious illness and complications from the H1N1 flu are:

- Pregnant women
- Caretakers of infants less than 6 months of age
- People under the age of 25
- Health care workers
- People with other underlying health conditions, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, blood disorders, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders, neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)

Individuals at higher risk for serious illness and complications from the flu should contact their health care provider at the first sign of the flu to see if it is appropriate for them to be prescribed an antiviral medicine, such as Tamiflu, which can reduce the severity of the flu. Individuals in the higher risk groups should also contact their health care provider if they are in close contact with someone with the flu, as their health care provider may prescribe antiviral medicine to help prevent the flu.

While the majority of individuals who have H1N1 flu recover at home without medical treatment, there are times when it is appropriate to seek medical treatment. Anyone experiencing severe or worsening symptoms should immediately contact their health care providers or go to a hospital, he said.

Signs that medical treatment may be needed for children include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Refusing to drink fluids
- Severe vomiting or diarrhea that won't stop
- Being too irritable to be held
- Bluish skin color
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

Signs that medical treatment may be needed for adults include:

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe vomiting that won't stop
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

H1N1 flu activity is currently widespread in New York State and across the United States. Vaccine provides the best protection against the flu. Individuals should check with their health care provider regarding the availability of both the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines. "While vaccine offers the greatest protection from the flu, there are currently not enough H1N1 flu vaccine supplies to meet the demand due to delays in production reported by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)," said Mr. Stapleton. "As we wait for vaccine to become more plentiful in the coming weeks, there are important measures Niagara County residents can take to reduce their chances of getting and spreading the flu."

Mr. Stapleton urged all residents to take the following additional preventive measures:

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your elbow, not your hands. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you aren't near a sink.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth. Flu spreads that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home when you are sick, and do not return to school or work until you have been fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours.

More information on the flu is available at www.niagaracounty.com/Health/ , on the State Health Department's website at www.nyhealth.gov , and on the CDC website at www.flu.gov .

Residents with questions may also call (716) 439-7492 or the State Health Department Toll-free Hotline at 1-800-808-1987.