



Government of the Northwest Territories Influenza Update

17 November 2009

Flu Activity this Week

Public health officials are reporting the NWT is experiencing the second wave of H1N1 flu activity. However, we have reached our peak. Flu activity is now declining.

Active cases have been identified in 26 of the 33 NWT communities. H1N1 is the only influenza strain circulating in NWT communities at this time.

There have been no new hospital admissions but two late reports of NWT residents hospitalized with H1N1 influenza last week, for a total of 48 lab-confirmed H1N1 hospitalizations to date of which 6 were admitted to ICU.

The Health and Social Services Flu Line received 75 calls last week. The Flu Line continues to refer people needing further care to health centres or clinics. The majority of people suffering with the flu in the NWT are experiencing mild to moderate symptoms and have been recovering on their own.

Schools have seen higher rates of absenteeism from this outbreak, but all NWT schools have remained open. Self-isolation continues to be the best way to reduce the spread of the flu between people. Normal social contact between healthy people does not present an increased risk of spreading the flu.

There have been no known H1N1-related deaths in the NWT to date.

Developments/Announcements this Week

Over 24,000 NWT residents, or 56% of the NWT's population, have received the H1N1 vaccine to date. Approximately 75% vaccine coverage is our target goal to optimally combat the spread of H1N1 in our communities. However, we can attribute the current decline in flu activity to rapid uptake of H1N1 vaccine in the NWT.

The H1N1 mass vaccination campaign ended last week. However, local public health clinics and community health centres will continue to offer the vaccine for the next few weeks. The most up-to-date schedule is available on the Health and Social Services website.

There have been very few cases of people exhibiting unusual reactions to the flu shot. Out of 24,000 shots administered, only 21 people have experienced uncommon side effects. There have been no cases of true anaphylactic reactions to the shot.

New guidelines on vaccinating children aged 3-9 against H1N1 were issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). Children in this age group require only one half-dose of the adjuvanted vaccine and will not need to get a second shot. Children aged 6 months to under 3 years may need a second shot pending clinical trial data.

Public Information

Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Kami Kandola held a press conference on November 12, 2009 to update media on current flu activity, vaccine uptake and flu-related hospitalizations to date.

Information about the H1N1 influenza vaccine has been posted to the HSS website, along with myths and facts about the influenza vaccine.

A full range of information on preventing the flu, caring for the sick and taking steps to protect individuals is available on the Health and Social Services website at <http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca>.

For more information

The *Government of the Northwest Territories Influenza Update* is distributed weekly and includes the most recent information on flu activity in the NWT.

For more information about protecting yourself from the flu or about the GNWT's H1N1 plans and activities, please visit the Health and Social Services website at <http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca>.

You may also call the Flu Line at 1-888-920-3026 or the Health Line at 1-888-255-1010