



Government of the Northwest Territories Influenza Update

3 November 2009

Flu Activity this Week

Public health officials are reporting the NWT is experiencing the second wave of H1N1 flu activity. 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 10 new cases of NWT residents hospitalized with H1N1 influenza last week, for a total of 40 lab-confirmed H1N1 hospitalizations to date.

The Health and Social Services Flu Line received 421 calls last week for a total of 956 calls during the month of October. This compares to 240 calls taken during the month of September. 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 are seeing higher rates of absenteeism, but all NWT schools continue to remain 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

The NWT H1N1 vaccination campaign began on October 26, 2009. Community and regional health staff are working to administer the H1N1 vaccine all across the NWT. The vaccine is being broadly distributed and Regional Authorities are making staff available to vaccinate residents in many NWT communities, even in advance of scheduled visits from the H1N1 Action Teams.

The schedule for the H1N1 Actions Teams is being revised and updated on a daily basis, taking the specific needs of individual communities into account. Where teams are ahead of schedule, plans are being adjusted to allow them to move on to other communities sooner than expected.

The Department and Regional Authorities continue to work with communities to make sure all NWT residents know when the vaccine is available in their communities. As a result of this work, over 16,000 NWT residents received flu shots during the first week of the immunization campaign alone.

During the first week of the campaign, flu clinics were held in Fort Resolution, Nahanni Butte, Hay River Reserve, Wrigley, Deline, Inuvik, Jean Marie River, Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife.

H1N1 Action teams are also visiting the NWT's five correctional facilities in Fort Smith, Hay River, Yellowknife and Inuvik to vaccinate inmates and staff as part of the ongoing immunization campaign.

For the week of November 2-7, 2009, flu clinics will be held in Whati, Gameti, Trout Lake, Wekweeti, Fort Simpson, Behchoko, Hay River, Fort Providence and Lutselk'e.

Yellowknife Public Health will offer H1N1 vaccinations on a drop-in basis from 3:30-4:30 pm, Monday to Friday.

MACA Regional Superintendents continue to remain in regular contact with community governments, and offer support to plan for and respond to potential flu outbreaks when needed.

Public Information

Minister of Health and Social Services Sandy Lee delivered a statement in the Legislative Assembly updating the people of the NWT on the progress of the immunization campaign on October 27, 2009.

Minister Lee and Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Kami Kandola took questions from across the NWT during a two-hour radio call-in show on CKLB on October 28, 2009.

The schedule for administering H1N1 vaccinations across the NWT has been posted to the HSS website and will be updated as necessary.

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

Advertisements announcing dates and times for local flu clinics continue to run and flu clinic posters have been distributed to communities.

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