

MOST URGENT



No. F. 1-51-Inf/FE&DSD/2016
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WHO Collaborating Center for Research and Training in Viral Diagnostics

10 November 2016

Subject: Advisory for Prevention and Control of Influenza A/H1N1 Infections

The world including Pakistan encountered H1N1 Influenza pandemic since 2009 and WHO declared outbreak of human cases of Influenza A/H1N1 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under IHR 2005. During August 2010, WHO affirmed H1N1 post pandemic phase and declared it as a seasonal flu virus. Moreover, it has been reported that the virus activity is continuously enhancing in Asia, especially our neighbouring countries like China, India and Iran etc.

In the wake of upsurge in number of influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 cases in Pakistan during 2015-16 (October-March), it is imperative to be vigilant in detection of any suspected Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) cases especially in elders, very young, overweight / obese, immunocompromised and people with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes, cardiac & lungs diseases and pregnant women who are at high risk to complicated consequences with H1N1 infection.

The throat swab sample of any suspected patient should be collected and transported to the National Institute of Health Islamabad under intimation to the Field Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Division (FE&DSD) and may be contacted on Tel: 051-9255237 and Fax No. 051-9255575. Updated guidelines on prevention, control and management of Influenza are available at NIH website (www.nih.org.pk).

Objective of this advisory is to sensitize the health-care authorities and facilities to strengthen and improve the level of preparedness in prevention and control of influenza A (H1N1) pdm09. If someone is sick or have been in close-contact with persons sick with flu-like illness, following preventing measures will help to mitigate the H1N1 transmission:

- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes as the virus survives on common surfaces, etc.
- Take rest, avoid crowds and take other social distancing measures.
- Staying home for young children from school if he/ she is sick and avoid mixing and playing with other children.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Avoid contaminating your hands, cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inner crook of your elbow.

Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent infection and severe outcomes caused by influenza viruses particularly in high risk groups. WHO recommends annual trivalent/ Quadrivalent seasonal vaccines for use in the 2016-17 in northern hemisphere influenza season with the following composition:

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A. Trivalent Composition:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

B. Quadrivalent Composition:

- All composition of trivalent vaccine plus a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus

WHO recommends seasonal influenza vaccination for:

- i. Pregnant women (highest priority)
- ii. Children aged 6-59 months
- iii. Elderly people
- iv. Individuals with chronic medical conditions (diabetes, hypertension, COPD)
- v. Health-care workers

Treatment:

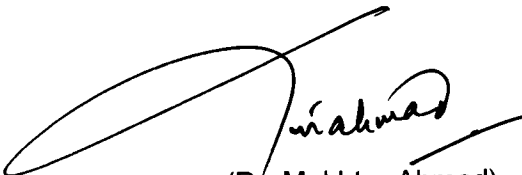
Treatment is mainly supportive. In hospitalized children, early antiviral treatment has been shown to shorten the duration of hospitalization. Antiviral treatment (**Oseltamivir/Tamiflu**) is recommended **as early as possible** for any patient with confirmed or suspected influenza who:

- is hospitalized;
- has severe, complicated, or progressive illness; or
- is at higher risk for influenza complications.

Persons at higher risk for influenza complications recommended for antiviral treatment include:

- children aged younger than 2 years
- adults aged 65 years and older
- persons with chronic comorbidities
- persons with immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV infection;
- women who are pregnant or postpartum (within 2 weeks after delivery);
- persons aged younger than 19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy;
- persons who are morbidly obese
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.

NIH recommends this advisory be widely distributed among all concerned.



(Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad)
Executive Director

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