

MOST URGENT



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**Field Epidemiology & Disease Surveillance Division
Focal Point for International Health Regulations
National Institute of Health**

Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination

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WHO Collaborating Center for Research and Training in Viral Diagnostics

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Subject: Advisory for Prevention and Control of Influenza Infections

Enhanced influenza viruses activity is expected in South Asia including Pakistan. In the wake of expected upsurge of influenza cases in the different parts of country, it is imperative to be vigilant in the detection of any suspected Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) cases especially in **elders, very young, overweight/ obese, immune-compromised and people with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes, cardiac & respiratory diseases and pregnant women** who are at high risk for developing complications due to Influenza infection, which may lead to fatal outcomes.

Objective of this advisory is to sensitize the health-care authorities and facilities to strengthen and improve the level of preparedness in prevention, control and management of influenza. If someone is sick or has been in close-contact with persons having flu-like illness, following preventing measures are recommended to be disseminated for awareness and thereby limiting the Influenza transmission:

- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer when away from hand washing facility.
- Wash hands when contaminated with secretions from nose, mouth or eyes.
- Take rest, avoid crowds and take other social distancing measures when you are sick.
- Stay at home; young children should avoid mixing and playing with other children.
- Cover mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Avoid contaminating hands, cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inner crook of elbow.

Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent infection and severe outcomes caused by influenza viruses particularly in high risk groups. WHO recommends seasonal influenza vaccination for **pregnant women** (highest priority), children aged 6-59 months, elderly people, individuals with chronic medical conditions and health-care workers.

WHO recommends trivalent/ quadrivalent seasonal vaccines for use during 2018-19 in northern hemisphere influenza season with the following composition:

- an A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage); and
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata/16/88 lineage).

Contd...on P/2

Treatment is mainly supportive, however in hospitalized patients, early antiviral treatment has been shown to shorten the duration of illness. Antiviral treatment (**Oseltamivir/ Tamiflu**) is recommended 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. Moreover; 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.

The throat swab sample of any suspected patient should be collected earlier in the course of illness and transported in viral transport medium (VTM) to Influenza sentinel labs at provincial sentinel labs or to the National Institute of Health Islamabad under intimation to the Field Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Division (FE&DSD). Contact Tel: 051-9255237 and Fax No. 051-9255575. Updated guidelines on prevention, control and management of Influenza along with patient history form for ILI/SARI are available at NIH website (www.nih.org.pk) which may be filled and sent to NIH along with the samples of the suspected patients.

NIH recommends that this advisory be widely distributed among all concerned.


Brig. Dr. Aamer Ikram, SI(M)
Executive Director

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