

# Recent Clusters of H1N1 Influenza severe disease

Recently there have been news reports of isolated clusters of severe Influenza (H1N1) in Texas, Alberta and Ontario. The circulating strain is the 2009 H1N1 California pandemic strain and it is sensitive to antivirals. These clusters involving a small number of adults have often required intensive care support and provision of ECMO.

These clusters have come in the absence of significant community Influenza activity and without a focus on the very young which is the usual pattern of H1N1 severe disease.

In the last week a small number of similar severe cases have presented in Vancouver Coastal and Island Health Regions.

The reason for these clusters is unclear although early data suggests that patients have significant comorbidities and, as during the pandemic, morbid obesity is a factor.

The Province of British Columbia is implementing an enhanced surveillance process in order to monitor the implications for care and the availability of ECMO and ventilated beds.

I write to request that all patients hospitalized with Influenza are notified by physicians direct to my office in addition to the usual Public Health notifications through laboratories.

This H1N1 strain is present in the current vaccine. Vaccination remains the mainstay of influenza control and it is not too late for BC residents to be immunized.

## Key practice points:

- Background influenza activity remains low and the circulating strain is largely the H1N1 2009 pandemic Strain.
- H1N1 viruses tend to produce an increase in hospitalization and severe disease in the very young.
- The circulating strain remains sensitive to routine antivirals such as Oseltamivir
- Small clusters of very severe disease have been seen in younger adults with other comorbidities.
- These cases are requiring intensive care admission and often EMCO in addition.
- Practitioners are requested to advise the Chief Medical Health Officer of any Influenza related hospital admissions.

Please contact my office if clarification is required on [paul.vanbuynder@fraserhealth.ca](mailto:paul.vanbuynder@fraserhealth.ca)

*The Fraser Health Medical Health Officers are available for medical consultations and can be reached at 604-587-3828 or 1-877-342-6467 (in Fraser East).*

*To page MHO on-call after hours: 604-527-4806*