

## SEASONAL INFLUENZA UPDATE

### GENERAL PRACTITIONERS and ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICES



Health  
H19/51732

Please distribute to all doctors and staff in your practice

1. The annual influenza season has begun earlier than usual and influenza activity is high across NSW.
2. Antiviral treatment should be considered for all patients with confirmed or suspected influenza at increased risk of complications.
3. Please continue to vaccinate high-risk patients, including young children, pregnant women, Aboriginal people, those with chronic medical conditions and all people aged 65 years and over.

#### Situation update

NSW Health has declared an early start to the influenza season after detecting a steep rise in influenza activity. This comes on top of unusually high influenza activity over the summer and autumn months.

Over 15,000 influenza notifications have been received so far this year, including 5,013 in May. There have been 37 deaths reported in people with laboratory-confirmed influenza and 38 influenza outbreaks in aged care facilities.

Flu A strains continue to predominate but Flu B activity is also increasing.

#### Flu treatment

- Antiviral treatment (with Tamiflu or Relenza) is recommended for pregnant women with suspected influenza and should be considered for other people with a clinical or laboratory diagnosis of influenza who are at increased risk of influenza complications. Treatment should be started as soon as possible and not be delayed for test results.
- Consider antiviral treatment for other patients with confirmed or suspected influenza if treatment can be started within 48 hours of onset, particularly those who have household contacts at higher risk of influenza complications.
- Regardless of duration of symptoms, offer treatment to patients with influenza and established complications, those who need hospital admission, and those with moderate-severity or high-severity community-acquired pneumonia during the influenza season.
- Refer to the Therapeutic Guidelines at <https://tgldcdp.tg.org.au/index> for detailed advice. Consult the product information for additional guidance, including dosage adjustment in renal impairment and for children (Tamiflu), and precautions for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or asthma (Relenza).

#### Vaccine supply and delivery

- Influenza vaccines under the National Immunisation Program are available for all age-groups.
- Influenza vaccine orders can be made online at: <https://nsw.tolihealthcare.com/>
- Carers and household contacts of people in high-risk groups, including visitors of residential care facility residents, should also be recommended to receive annual influenza vaccine (this is via private supply).

#### Further Information

- NSW Health Influenza website: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/flu](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/flu)
- Contact your local Public Health Unit on **1300 066 055**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Sheppeard'.

Dr Vicky Sheppeard  
Director, Communicable Diseases  
30 May 2019