



Medical Officer of Health
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May 1, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Update to IP&C Recommendations

Updates have been made to previously circulated Public Health Agency of Canada Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) guidelines for Acute Care Facilities and Ambulatory Care Settings.

One important change in both documents is the classification of a nasopharyngeal swab as an aerosol generating procedure. N95 masks are recommended when undertaking aerosol generating procedures.

N95 masks are usually available in acute care facilities and appropriate people have been fit tested. In community physicians' offices it is assumed that few staff or physicians have been fit tested and few have a supply of N95 masks. In that situation it has been recommended by the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Alberta Health Services response plan that:

- Patients with mild influenza-like-illness (ILI) symptoms should not have a viral swab taken.
- If a swab is warranted because the person is at high risk of complications as with any influenza, a throat swab would be obtained. Although it is not the preferred specimen it is often useful. Nasal swabs are not useful.
- Patients should not be sent to Emergency Departments for nasopharyngeal swabs.

Other infection control strategies are as important as mask selection and use. These include asking patients with fever and cough to wear a surgical/procedure mask while in the waiting and examining room, frequent hand washing, eye protection, and gloves and gowns when working with a patient with suspect Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu). The IP&C recommendations are outlined in detail in the PHAC documents for Acute Care Facilities and Ambulatory Care Settings. The PHAC documents are available on the PHAC website

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine-porcine/hp-index-eng.php>

If you require the documents to be faxed to you, please call 403 943-0979 during business hours. Summary documents will be available and sent to you next week.

Alberta Health Services is actively developing ways to assist physicians with supplies. Details will be available early next week.

The screening criteria for increased suspicion of Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu) are the same in both settings but are expected to change as the situation evolves. Currently, consider Swine Influenza when patients present with onset of ILI within 7 days of either travel to areas experiencing Swine Flu, particularly Mexico or recent contact (7 days) with a person who travelled to affected areas and was ill when the contact occurred. Others of interest include laboratory workers or health care workers working in a facility where there is an outbreak of influenza-like-illness.

Information will be updated as recommendations are changed.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Musto".

Richard Musto, MD FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health