

EIU Health Services H1N1 Update – December 15, 2009

The holiday season is upon us and throughout the country the H1N1 influenza pandemic seems to be waning. The number of states reporting widespread flu activity decreased from 25 to 14. Visits to doctors and clinics for influenza-like illness and flu-associated hospitalizations declined from the previous week. Unfortunately, flu-associated deaths throughout the country increased. Illinois is still reporting regional activity due to flu at this time. EIU had 430 cases of H1N1 during the Fall 2009 semester.

For those attending Fall 2009 commencement, we remind you to wash your hands, cover your cough and consider staying home if you are ill or at high risk for complications should you become infected with H1N1. Hand sanitizers will be placed at all the entrances to Lantz. Please help us keep our campus healthy and use the hand sanitizers.

As stated last week, the H1N1 vaccine is now available to the general public. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated. Health Service has the vaccine and will administer the vaccine free of charge to any person 10 years of age and older, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, through Tuesday, December 22 or until vaccine supply is depleted.

It is uncertain whether there will be additional waves of H1N1 influenza or what they will look like. This is why it is so important that people, especially those in priority groups, get vaccinated. Past pandemics have appeared very similar to what we have experienced with the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. In the 1957-58 influenza pandemic, a first wave occurred from mid-September through November and then another wave came from January through March 1958.

If another wave comes in the next few weeks it will coincide with our usual flu season. We may again experience increased numbers of visits to doctors, clinics and hospitals for flu-like symptoms, potentially overwhelming the healthcare system. So as a final reminder, please get vaccinated for H1N1 and Seasonal flu to ensure a Happy Holiday season and a healthy New Year!

Sincerely,
Sheila D. Baker, MD
Medical Director
Eastern Illinois University