

Important Health Notice

Information for Healthcare Professionals

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Update on Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Response to Avian Influenza in Asia

Dear Colleagues:

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) continues to monitor the global SARS/Avian Flu situation closely. Information provided in the January 30, 2004 (Volume 1, Issue 4) *Important Health Notice* continues to be relevant.

Healthcare providers are asked to continue their diligence in the application of the *Infection Control and Surveillance Standards for Febrile Respiratory Illness*, which includes:

- applying the screening questions, including asking travel history to affected geographic areas when appropriate
- the availability and use of appropriate personal protective equipment as outlined
- reporting of severe respiratory infections and/or severe influenza-like illnesses and specific travel history to the local public health unit as required (refer to previous *Important Health Notices*).

The ministry continues to develop its response to an outbreak of severe respiratory illnesses of international public health importance with the following activities:

- infection control and surveillance standards for acute care facilities; modifications for non-acute facilities and the community will be available mid-February.

- the draft Ontario Pandemic Influenza Plan has been distributed to local health units for consultation
- Provincial Transfer Authorization Centre (PTAC), the provincial patient tracking system, is being maintained for all private/public patient transfers
- VIA Registry is available for health care providers to volunteer in health emergencies
- protocols for rapid licensure of healthcare professionals from other provinces
- a level III public health laboratory is in place to support local health units when faced with an emergency
- four Rapid Response teams are available to support to local public health units when faced with an emergency (access through the MOHLTC Public Health Division)
- public health units have received additional resources
- an epi-centre has been created to receive, monitor and disseminate epidemiological information
- Emergency Medical Assistance Team (EMAT), Canada's first mobile acute care 20-bed unit, is now ready to assist in any outbreak in Ontario accessible by road within 24 hours

- Help Line for healthcare service providers in place – 1-866-212-2272, including access to EMAT
- directives for action in a respiratory outbreak are in place in all sectors
- roster of negative pressure rooms across the province maintained.

The ministry will keep you informed of further developments internationally and of the provincial responses. We will also provide you with details regarding our ongoing emergency planning.

Sincerely,

Allison J. Stuart
Director, Emergency Management Unit
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Additional Information Sources for Avian influenza (H5N1):

The latest postings from WHO, are available at:

WHO
<http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/>

WHO, WPRO
http://www.wpro.who.int/public/press_release/Press_List.asp

A detailed fact sheet on avian influenza (H5N1) issued by the WHO is available at:

http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/

Additional Information Sources for SARS:

There is no change in the number of confirmed SARS cases. The latest postings from WHO are available at:

WHO
<http://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/>

WHO, WPRO
http://www.wpro.who.int/public/press_release/Press_List.asp

Ministry Information Sources

For Healthcare providers

Website:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/sars/sars_mn.html

Infection Control Help Line: 1-866-212-2272

For Patients

Websites:

www.health.gov.on.ca
www.HealthyOntario.com

Telehealth: 1-866-797-0000 (1-866-797-0007 TTY)

Ministry INFOLine: 1-877-234-4343

