

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Corporate
Communications

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MEDIA RELEASE

TO: News Room

FROM: Michele Hider, Communications Manager

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SUBJECT: Canterbury Activates 2010 Flu Strategy

The Canterbury health system is activating its 2010 influenza strategy following a rapid rise in the number of cases of Pandemic Influenza H1N1 (swine flu) in Canterbury in the last three weeks.

Canterbury District Health Board Chief Medical Officer Dr Nigel Millar said, the flu was having only a mild to moderate impact on Canterbury compared to other parts of the country but systems needed to be in place to ensure that health services could cope with increasing numbers of sick people.

“We now have 135 identified cases of swine flu in the community and three quarters of these have been detected in August. Thankfully we think that upwards of 40 per cent of Canterbury people are likely to be immune to swine flu this year either from vaccination or having come in contact with it last year,” he said.

This year, the Canterbury health system will not be opening flu centres but directing people who think they may have influenza to phone their General Practice promptly, so that antiviral medicines can be prescribed if necessary. This is especially important if the person is at greater risk of complications from influenza from a long term health condition, being pregnant or very overweight.

“Calling their General Practice early is important if people think they have the flu as antiviral medicines such as Tamiflu are most effective when taken within 48 hours of symptoms starting,” General Practitioner Dr Phil Schroeder said.

Remember to call as early as possible during the day in case you need to be seen by a General Practitioner or Practice Nurse. If someone's usual General

Practice is too busy to see them that day, they will be referred to another nearby clinic. The cost of visiting another clinic will be about the same as if you were visiting your usual General Practice.

The Canterbury flu line (0800 37 30 37) is also being re-activated for people to call if they are worried about their flu symptoms or that of someone in their family.

For after hours care, people should still call their General Practice. The call will either be answered by a nurse who will be able to provide advice or an answer phone that will direct you to the phone number of your nearest after hours centre.

Remember to phone before visiting any medical centre so that the centre can prepare for your visit and prevent the spread of influenza to other patients.

As usual, if it is an emergency dial 111. Christchurch Hospital's Emergency Department should be kept for emergencies only.

ENDS

For further information, please call CDHB Communications Manager Michele Hider on 0275 314 796

Background

Along with having a flu vaccination, the most important things people can do to help protect themselves and their families against influenza are:

- Washing and drying hands thoroughly (20 seconds washing and 20 seconds drying) before eating, after using the toilet and after being with someone who is unwell.
- Staying away from school or work if they are unwell.
- Covering coughs and sneezes.

Symptoms of the influenza virus can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.