

October 30, 2009

For Immediate Release

## **Health Authority Opening Flu Assessment Centre to respond to Influenza Activity**

### **H1N1 Vaccination Clinic Update – No Clinics Monday, Nov. 2**

Truro – The Colchester East Hants Health Authority announced today that it would be opening its first Flu Assessment Centre this weekend in response to an increasing number of patients presenting to the Colchester Regional Hospital and Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital emergency departments with influenza like illness (ILI).

The CRH emergency department has experienced a 20 per cent increase in visits since Monday and up to 50 per cent of visitors to the LFMH emergency department have arrived with flu-like symptoms. To date, none of the patients seen has experienced significant complications or have required admission.

The Flu Assessment Centre, which will be located at the Douglas Street Elementary School in Truro will provide an avenue for individuals presenting with an influenza-like illness (ILI) to be assessed for flu and H1N1.

#### **Flu Assessment Centre Facts:**

- Beginning at 12:30, October 31, the clinic will operate daily from 12:30 - 7:30 p.m. These hours of operation may change, and additional Flu Assessment Centres may open in other locations as needed.
- Adults and children experiencing flu-like symptoms who wish to be seen by a health care professional are asked to visit Flu Assessment Centre instead of going to hospital emergency departments. (Flu-like symptoms are fever and/or cough, and one or more of the following: unusual tiredness, headache, muscle or joint aches, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea in children less than five years of age.)
- Health professionals will provide advice on what individuals need to do to get better and they may also provide treatment. For those requiring additional care or follow-up, they will provide the referral.
- The intent of these centres is to provide individuals presenting with ILI with a brief (about 15 minutes), highly specific assessment that will lead to faster treatment, help ease congestion in hospital ERs and reduce the spread of influenza.
- **As with any medical emergency, if you are severely ill, you should seek immediate help by going to your nearest emergency department or calling 911. Signs of severe illness may include chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, severe vomiting in children, high fever and confusion.**
- The Assessment Centre is not providing vaccinations for seasonal or H1N1 flu, is not swabbing patients to confirm H1N1 and will not offer inpatient care.
- People visiting the Assessment Centre do not require an appointment, but do need to bring their health card (if they have one).

### Vaccination Continuing to Be Offered

Because of national vaccine supply issues announced today, Nova Scotia is changing its immunization strategy. Starting Monday, November 2, the H1N1 vaccine will be limited to those most at risk from the virus. These are:

- Pregnant women.
- Children younger than five (from six months to 59 months)
- People living in First Nations communities
- Health-care workers in district health authorities, long term care facilities and home-care agencies who provide direct care to patients. This includes family physicians, family practice nurses, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

People who do not belong to one of these groups will not receive the vaccine at this time. The province will re-assess its vaccine supply on an ongoing basis, and will offer immunization later to other groups, based on risk, as vaccine supply allows.

CEHHA will continue to offer public clinics for the identified groups but will be issuing a revised schedule weekly. The schedule for next week is as follows.

Week of November 1-7		
Truro *note location change	Tatamagouche	Elmsdale
<b>Truro Mall, 245 Robie Street</b> Tuesday, Nov. 3 2pm - 8pm Wednesday, Nov. 4 2pm - 8pm Saturday, Nov. 7 10am - 4pm	<b>Primary Health Care Centre, Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital</b> Thursday, Nov. 5 2pm - 7pm	<b>East Hants Resource Centre</b> Tuesday, Nov. 3 10am - 4pm Thursday, Nov. 5 10am - 4pm Saturday, Nov. 7 10am - 4pm

### Service Reductions/Closures

As a result of the increased pressures on the health care system and the need to free of resources to support the Flu Assessment Centre, some services are being scaled back or temporarily cancelled until further notice including: Diabetes Education Centre (closed); Seniors Clinic (closed) and Outpatient Department appointments are being cancelled. Updates will continue to be provided.

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For more information media are asked to contact:

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***\*Media Access Will Not Be Provided to the Flu Assessment Centre: An internal photo of the facility will be made available to media next week. Communications Nova Scotia has also compiled video footage and photos related to H1N1 which can be accessed by contacting:***

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