

**Media Release August 11, 2010**

## **SWINE FLU STILL HERE**

The Ministry of Health is reminding people that New Zealand is still seeing a significant level of pandemic influenza even though the World Health Organization (WHO) has announced the world is now in the post-pandemic phase, Deputy Director of Public Health Darren Hunt said today.

WHO Director-General Margaret Chan recognised that New Zealand was still experiencing the effects of a second wave of H1N1

“In the post-pandemic period, localised outbreaks of different magnitude may show significant levels of H1N1 transmission. This is the situation we are observing right now in New Zealand,” Mrs Chan said.

Dr Chan also paid tribute to the health authorities in New Zealand, in terms of vigilance, quick detection and treatment, and recommending vaccination, which provided a model of how other countries may need to respond in the immediate post-pandemic period.

Dr Hunt said New Zealanders still needed to remain vigilant as there had been significant outbreaks of influenza in some areas which had resulted in high levels of absenteeism from work and school and higher than normal hospital admissions.

“While some countries have seen H1N1 virus decline or crowded out by other strains, this is not the case in New Zealand

“The pandemic influenza strain is the predominant strain circulating this winter. Some areas, particularly those who were not greatly affected last year, are now being hit with high levels of illness in the community.

We are seeing higher levels of hospitalisation in areas that weren't severely affected last year. To date, there had been over 300 people admitted to hospital this year with confirmed H1N1, which includes over 30 people admitted to intensive care.

For some people influenza can be a very serious illness, which it's why it's important to seek medical advice early. This is particularly important for people at higher risk of severe illness like pregnant women, young children, those who are severely overweight and people with other significant health problems. Call your GP or Healthline 0800 611 116.

The Ministry will be issuing a more detailed update of the influenza situation in New Zealand later today.

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