

Pandemic H1N1 2009 Virus
3rd December 2009. Update 37
Perspective from WHO Lao PDR

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Surveillance Reporting for H1N1 in Lao PDR

At the end of August, the National Centre for Laboratory and Epidemiology (NCLE) ceased testing each suspect case of H1N1, except in severe cases, health care workers and in provinces that do not yet have cases. The objective of surveillance is now to monitor all influenza-like illness by using a system of monitoring that has been adopted in many countries world-wide.

Situation update for Lao PDR in week 48 of 2009 is as follows:

- Pandemic H1N1 occurrence is widespread with greater than 50% of provinces affected (currently confirmed in 13 of 17 provinces)
- The total number of cases of respiratory disease remains slightly higher than that seen at this time in previous years
- There is currently no disruption of health care services due to pandemic H1N1.
- While 283 cases have been laboratory confirmed with 2 deaths, because individual cases are no longer being tested, the number of confirmed cases underestimates the actual level of the disease in the community.

The SEA Games brings an increased number of visitors and gatherings to Lao PDR, thus the National Centre for Laboratory and Epidemiology is undertaking enhanced daily surveillance for respiratory disease among others to monitor the situation and respond quickly if needed.

Regional Update (countries bordering Lao PDR)

The H1N1 virus is widespread throughout the region. For information about Pandemic H1N1 2009 worldwide, please visit the WHO International website: www.who.int

Vaccines and more Tamiflu coming to Lao PDR

Vaccines and antivirals are key tools in our ability to fight this pandemic. Lao PDR will be receiving 600,000 doses of donated pandemic vaccine which is enough to vaccinate about 10% of the population. WHO Lao is already being asked whether there will be vaccine available for international and national staff of UN organizations. This is dependant on the individual UN organizations. For vaccine being donated to Lao PDR, high-risk groups such as pregnant women will be prioritized. We would advise any staff that has access to vaccination in their country of origin to seek this vaccination during holidays or business travel as it will be unlikely that foreign nationals will have access to donated vaccine.

Lao PDR will also receive a boost of 93,000 adult courses of Tamiflu from WHO, expected to also arrive within the next month. All people at risk for developing severe illness, and those experiencing the symptoms listed below should seek immediate care from a physician and take antiviral medication as recommended.

Ongoing issues

It is still important to wash your hands frequently to help protect yourself and others from infection. To protect the health of others further and also to help ensure a quick recovery if you become ill, please stay home until you are well recovered. Covering your coughs and sneezes will also help to protect others from the virus.

The Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Task Force and the National Emerging and Infectious Disease Coordinating Office (NEIDCO) are working hard to convey how important it is that each person takes responsibility for helping to prevent the spread of the Pandemic H1N1 virus and with UNICEF and WHO support are currently running radio and TV information programmes as well as placing billboards at the SEA Games Stadium.

Know when it's time to see a doctor

Those who are at high risk for severe illness from Pandemic H1N1 should see a doctor if they develop any symptoms of the flu which may include a fever, cough, sore throat, headache and body aches.

Those at higher risk include:

- Pregnant women, particularly in second and third trimesters.
- Persons with chronic (long-term) illnesses such as wheezing or asthmatic conditions, cardiac disease, diabetes mellitus, chronic metabolic diseases, chronic renal diseases, chronic neurological conditions
- Persons with haemoglobinopathies (genetically inherited disorders of red blood cell haemoglobin including sickle cell disease and the thalassaemias.)
- Persons with immunosuppression (including from cancers, HIV/AIDS infection, drugs)
- Children under 5 years of age.
- Persons with morbid obesity.

Even if you are not in a high risk group and you have flu-like symptoms, you should suspect H1N1. There is no need for testing, but if any of the following symptoms occur, seek medical care right away:

- Difficulty breathing
- Fever (temperature over 38 degrees C) lasting more than 2 days
- Condition improves and then gets worse

Where to get more information

UN Lao website: www.unlao.org

WHO International: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

US CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s_cid=swineFlu_outbreak_internal_001

France: http://www.invs.sante.fr/derniere_minute/default.asp

For technical queries:

Contact the World Health Organization, Lao PDR, email commdiseaseinfo.lao@wpro.who.int , phone 021 353902-4

For general medical queries from UN staff ONLY:

Contact the UN Dispensary, Ivy Caballes, email ivy.caballes@undp.org, office phone 021 267 789. ***Embassy staff should contact their normal clinic.***
