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### **Influenza Update: Testing and Treatment of Novel H1N1 Influenza A**

The H1N1 influenza A virus remains a concern for our region. Testing those who are in hospital, those who are seriously ill, and other individuals at risk of complications from this new virus enables scientists to learn how H1N1 might be different from the seasonal influenza.

“For those who are seriously ill and need medical treatment in hospital, testing will be done for H1N1 influenza A” says Dr. Jim Arthurs, Acting Medical Officer of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit. He suggests that if you can manage your symptoms at home, it is unlikely you will be tested for H1N1, stating “it won’t help you get better any faster, and it won’t give us any new information on the illness.”

People who do become seriously ill with the H1N1 virus can be treated with influenza antiviral medication as soon as symptoms start. Antivirals cannot protect a person from becoming infected or kill the virus once a person is infected. It can slow further spread of the virus through the body, which reduces the duration and severity of the illness.

If a person has been ill for more than a couple of days, it means the virus has already multiplied. This makes treatment with antivirals much less effective, and less likely to be prescribed by a physician. If antivirals are used excessively in the population, the viruses can potentially begin to adapt and develop resistance, which means the drugs might no longer be effective in treating the illness. Dr. Arthurs states that “unfortunately if you have been sick for a number of days, antivirals are not going to help. We must be cautious in the use of antivirals so they remain effective in the treatment of influenza”.

If you feel ill with flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider or call TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

Additional information can be found at [www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca).

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