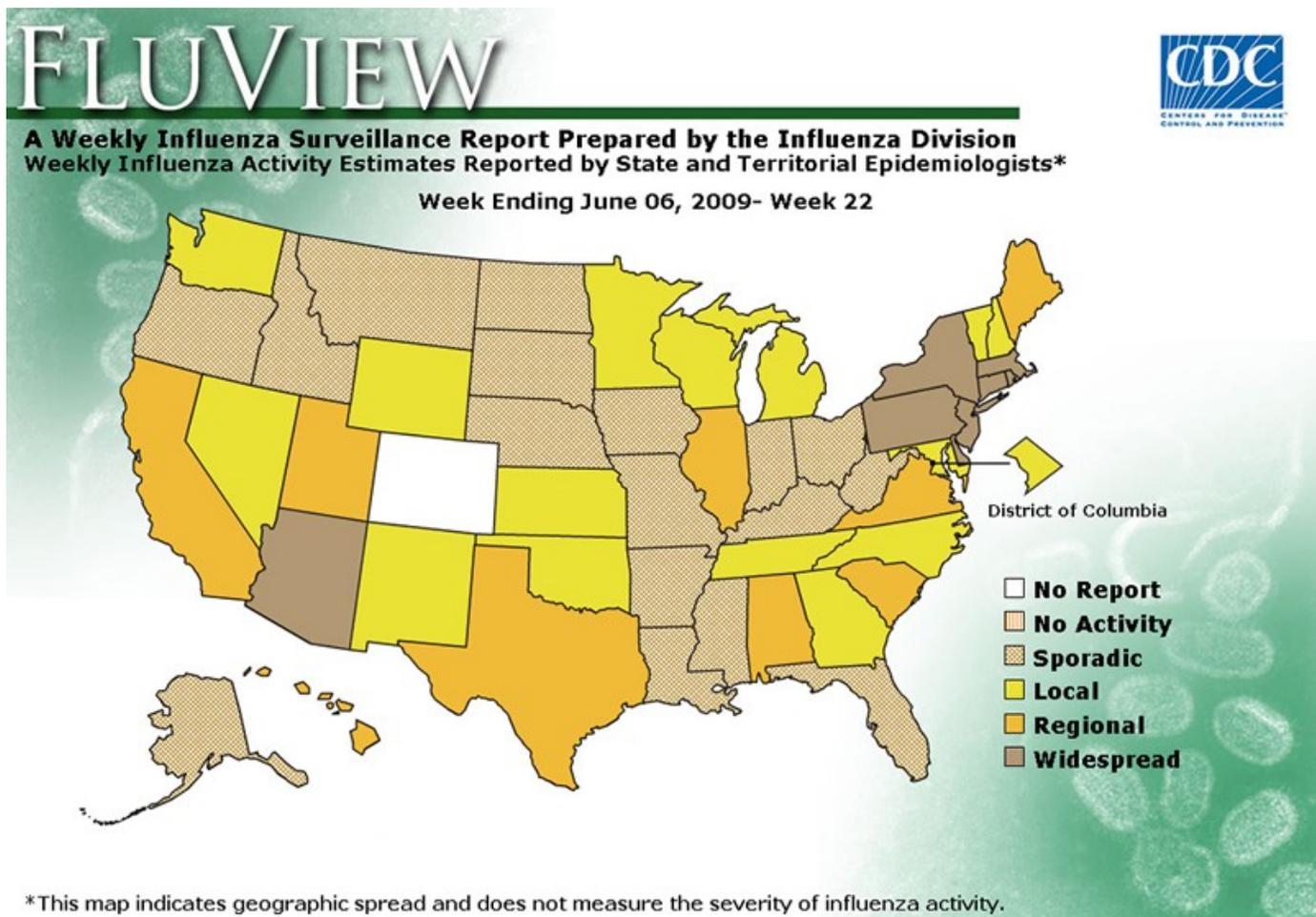


Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

Novel Influenza A (H1N1) plus update on sunscreens and web resources

Don't panic because the World Health Organization raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6 for H1N1. This designation indicates a global pandemic. Pandemic is defined as an epidemic that becomes geographically widespread. "This is a reflection of the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus" (CDC, June, 11, 2009). The number of outbreaks is now at community level outbreaks in multiple parts of the world. "It's uncertain at this time how serious or severe this novel H1N1 pandemic will be in terms of how many people infected will develop serious complications or die from novel H1N1 infection. Experience with this virus so far is limited and influenza is unpredictable. However, because novel H1N1 is a new virus, many people may have little or no immunity against it, and illness may be more severe and widespread as a result. In addition, currently there is no vaccine to protect against novel H1N1 virus" (CDC).



Most people in the United States have recovered without medical treatment. But, "CDC anticipates that there will be more cases, more hospitalizations and more deaths associated with this pandemic in the coming days and weeks. In addition, this virus could cause significant illness with associated hospitalizations and deaths in the fall and winter during the U.S. influenza season." Of concern is what might occur with this virus this coming fall and winter flu season. Will it become more deadly?

The novel H1N1 virus is probably spread the same way as other seasonal flu viruses (droplets from coughs and sneezes of infected persons, touching infected objects and then touching one's

nose and mouth.) The January 2009 Newsletter health article covered influenza in greater detail. Check these two CDC sites for indepth information: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm> and www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.

Protect self and family by staying informed (check local public health departments) and take the following steps:

- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw tissue in trash after use.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try avoiding close contact with sick people.
- If sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for 7 days after symptoms begin or until symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.
- Follow public health advice for closures or avoiding crowds.

For WWURA members who are frequent world travelers, the web site of the World Health Organization offers good information. <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

Update on sunscreens: The July 2009 issue of *Consumer Reports* provides a brief rating of sunscreens and explains the meanings of UVA, UVB, Broad Spectrum, Para-free, water resistant, and nanoparticles. Brief clarification is given about SPF numbers (e.g., is 15 good or does one need 50?). High rated products from 2007 are still recommended (e.g., Blue Lizard regular Australian SPF 30+).

Web resources for researching health and illness topics: Fact Sheet from National Institute of Health (NIH); www.nih.gov/about/researchresultsforthepublic/AWealthofHealth.pdf Information on Clinical trials is at <http://clinicaltrials.gov/>. Information about health effects of chemicals in household products is at: <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/> Genetics Home Reference on genes and genetics and practical information on genetic disorders and inherited conditions: <http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/> Home page of Medline is at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/> An interactive menu planner is new at the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute: <http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.net/menuplanner/menu.cgi> This menu planner has limitations.

“Laughter is an instant vacation.” Milton Berle

Enjoy the summer.