



STATE OF TENNESSEE
BUREAU OF TENNCARE
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
310 GREAT CIRCLE ROAD
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Memo

To: TennCare Providers
From: Bureau of TennCare
Date: September 25, 2009
Re: Influenza Season Update

As you are aware, we are currently seeing higher than normal circulation of influenza this year with the emergence of the 2009 novel H1N1 virus. As of September 18, 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have reported increasing and widespread influenza activity in the United States with anticipation of a severe and prolonged influenza season. Based on this information and recent guidance from the Centers of Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), **the Bureau of TennCare has decided to remove clinical criteria previously required for the antivirals, Tamiflu® and Relenza® effective immediately.** This step is being taken to ease the administrative burden on health care professionals given the large amount of influenza-like illness that is circulating in the State and little indication at this time that illness levels are subsiding. Tamiflu® and Relenza® will remain subject to quantity limits; however **prior authorization of these agents will no longer be required**, except for requests for above the quantity limits: Relenza® 20 per 6 months; Tamiflu® 10 capsules per 6 months, & Tamiflu® suspension 50 mls (2 bottles) per 6 months.

Despite the temporary removal of prior authorization criteria, strict adherence to the CDC guidelines regarding appropriate prescribing of influenza antiviral medications is expected, as this is critical to minimizing Tamiflu shortages and to preventing the development of Tamiflu® resistance. For more information on CDC guidelines, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>.

We would also like to remind you that TennCare's primary strategy for influenza management is prevention through vaccination programs. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends annual vaccination of all children aged 6 months to 18 years, beginning as soon as the 2009-10 influenza vaccine is available. They recommend primarily focusing annual vaccination efforts on children aged 6 months to 4 years (59 months) and older children with conditions that place them at increased risk for complications from influenza. In addition, annual vaccination against influenza is recommended for any adult who wants to reduce the risk of becoming ill with influenza or of transmitting it to others, with a specific focus on vaccination for persons aged 50 years and older; women who will be pregnant during the influenza season; persons who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, renal, hepatic, cognitive, neurologic/neuromuscular, hematological or metabolic disorders; persons who have immunosuppression; and residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

The injectable form of the seasonal influenza and H1N1 vaccine (when available) will be covered by TennCare for all recipients under the medical and pharmacy benefits. Currently the seasonal influenza vaccine is listed on the TennCare Auto-Exemption list; therefore will not be counted toward adult members' monthly prescription limit.

Please refer to the Tennessee Department of Health's website for further information regarding pre-registration for administration of the not-yet-available H1N1 vaccine. The link is: <http://health.state.tn.us/twis/>

Thank you for your valued participation in the TennCare program and please forward or copy the information in this notice to all providers who may be affected by this requirement.