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H1N1 swine influenza update: May 8, 2009

Note:

This is the last daily news release. Future news releases will be issued if there are new developments to report.

Case statistics will continue to be reported on the Oregon Department of Human Services Web site at www.flu.oregon.gov.

Cases:

As of Friday, Oregon public health officials had received confirmation of 69 cases of H1N1 flu. No new counties have been added to the list and Polk County continues to have the highest number of cases. As state officials have warned, the rise in numbers was expected and will likely continue until flu season is over.

“State epidemiologists continue to work with local public health officials in Polk County to investigate each case there,” says Dr. Mel Kohn, head of Oregon’s Public Health Division. “However, this flu continues to behave in the same fashion as other seasonal influenza in that it is common for some communities to have a higher percentage of cases.”

One teenage girl remains hospitalized and continues to recover. An additional child with other health concerns was hospitalized for one night earlier this week and released. The balance of the people are recovering or have recovered at home.

Of the 69 cases, 25 children, 16 teens and 28 adults have been confirmed to have H1N1 flu. Thirty-four are males and 35 are females.

The 69 cases break out by county as follows:

Clackamas – 2
Lane – 8
Marion - 5
Multnomah – 16
Polk – 28
Umatilla – 3
Washington – 7

New developments:

State public health officials are refocusing their energies from managing the H1N1 flu outbreak to preparing for the onset of flu season with this strain next fall and winter.

“We know more about the H1N1 swine flu virus than we did at the beginning of the outbreak,” said Dr. Mel Kohn, head of the Oregon Public Health Division. “By closely monitoring the cases, the disease progression and the means of transmission, we know now that the public should treat this outbreak as they would any outbreak of influenza.

“Although our response is changing as we’ve learned this flu runs a fairly normal course, Oregonians must remain vigilant by staying home if they have a flu-like illness, washing their hands, covering their cough, and taking other common-sense precautions,” Kohn said.

Because the H1N1 flu virus is a new strain, the state will maintain its epidemiological investigation and efforts, monitoring closely information gathered locally from providers, labs and hospitals, and nationally from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other resources.

Precautions

As has been previously noted, the H1N1 flu is spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people. People infected with the H1N1 swine flu virus may not be symptomatic one to four days following exposure.

The Oregon Public Health Division advises that when it comes to protecting yourself, your family and your clients, common sense precautions go a long way in avoiding infection. Use the normal safeguards you would to avoid any respiratory illness:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the garbage after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to avoid spreading germs.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are ill, please stay home to avoid spreading your illness to others.

Three flu-related resources remain available to the public:

A comprehensive Web site, www.flu.oregon.gov, is updated daily.

The public may ask questions of public health professionals by calling the hotline: 1-800-978-3040. The hotline is staffed weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Pacific time.

E-mail questions may be directed to flu.help@state.or.us.

H1N1 swine influenza symptoms are similar to those for seasonal flu and may include fever greater than 100 degrees F. or 37.8 degrees C.; sore throat; cough; stuffy nose; chills; headache or body aches; fatigue; and in some cases diarrhea and vomiting.