

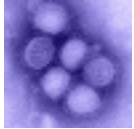


THE BENEFITS BULLETIN

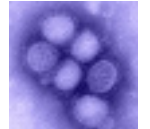
“Serving our members and their families”



May 2009



Staying Flu Free This Year



An OEBB Special Edition Newsletter

As of this week, Oregon public health officials had received confirmation of 99 cases of H1N1 flu. 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.”

Latest 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 Kohn. “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.

Several flu-related resources are available to the public:

See **FLU**, page 2



FLU, from page 1

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.

Kohn says three things will help people avoid infection when it makes a resurgence in the fall.

Those most likely to get the flu are people who:

- Smoke
- Have diabetes
- Obese or overweight

If you smoke, now's the time to quit. OEBB will offer a smoking cessation benefit beginning Oct. 1, 2009. In the meantime, the Department of Human Services

Influenza and Prevention

October 2008

Oregon Public Health Immunization Program

Influenza

Influenza is a seasonal disease spread by airborne droplets and contaminated surfaces and is highly contagious, even before the person knows they are sick.

Each year, between 5 and 20 percent of the worldwide population will become ill with influenza. In America, influenza and its complications cause an annual average of 36,000 deaths and 226,000 hospitalizations, as well as countless medical expenses and will often lead to secondary infections such as pneumonia, sinus and ear infections. Influenza also can interfere with the insulin cycle of persons with diabetes.

While deaths and hospitalizations for flu and flu-related complications tend to occur in the frail -- babies, the elderly, and persons with weak immune systems -- the majority of flu transmissions are spread by young, healthy, unvaccinated children and adults. To compli-

(DHS) has a free tobacco cessation program such as coaching and providing patches and gums to control the urge to smoke. Call these numbers free from anywhere in Oregon:

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)
Español: 1-877-2NO-FUME (1-877-266-3863)

If you have questions about your benefits, please call OEBB at (888) 4My-OEBB (888-469-6322).

Additional Resources:

General Guidance for Schools and Childcare Facilities

<http://www.flu.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/flu/h1n1flu-schoolchildcare.shtml>

Printable Materials for Your School

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/flu/printable-materials.shtml>

Center for Disease Control Swine Flu Podcasts

<http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11226>

cate the issue, some healthy persons can be infected, and contagious, but have no symptoms.

Influenza Prevention

Prevention of influenza requires a two-pronged attack:

1. Reduce transmission of the virus
 - o Frequent hand washing
 - o Cover sneezes and coughs
 - o Stay home when you're sick
 - o Clean work and household surfaces often
 - o Wear a mask if you have a compromised immune system
 - o Ask your family and friends to get flu vaccinations
2. Reduce susceptibility to the virus
 - o Get an annual influenza vaccination
 - o Get plenty of sleep
 - o Exercise and eat well

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding H1N1 Flu

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses which causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen.

How do you get H1N1 flu?

Although this new virus has been called "swine flu," it is not transmitted from eating pork products. Like other respiratory diseases, it is spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. When people cough or sneeze, they spread germs through the air or on to surfaces that other people may touch.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

What should I do to keep from getting the H1N1 flu?

There are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Influenza is thought to spread mainly from person to person when infected people cough or sneeze. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus.

What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

If you get sick, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. If you suspect you have H1N1 flu but don't believe you need immediate attention, call your regular doctor or health

care provider.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing;
- Bluish skin color;
- Not drinking enough fluids;
- Not waking up or not interacting;
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held;
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and a worse cough;
- Fever with a rash.

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath;
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen;
- Sudden dizziness;
- Confusion;
- Severe or persistent vomiting.

How can human infections with H1N1 flu be diagnosed?

To diagnose H1N1 flu, a respiratory specimen would generally need to be

collected within the first four to five days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be contagious). However, some persons, especially children, may be contagious for 10 days or longer.

Is there a treatment for swine flu?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent H1N1 flu, but there are medications to help treat it. These medicines are generally used to prevent serious flu complications such as pneumonia and work best if started soon after getting sick (within two days of symptoms). Whether a person with influenza needs to take one of these medicines is a decision that must be made by the patient and his/her health care provider.

Public health officials in Oregon strongly discourage the use of anti-flu medicines by people who do not have suspected or confirmed cases of flu as determined by a physician or local health official. In addition, if H1N1 flu is suspected, anti-flu medications should not be used if more than 48 hours have passed since symptoms began. Anti-flu medicines should be used to prevent flu only in people who are very young or have other medical conditions and



FLU FAQ, from page 3

who have been recently exposed to someone with a confirmed case of H1N1 influenza.

How do I care for someone at home who is sick with flu-like symptoms?

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

- Keep the sick person away from others as much as possible.
- Remind them to cover their coughs and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- Have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Ask your health care provider if people in the household who are around the sick person, particularly those contacts who may have chronic health conditions, should take antiviral medications to prevent the flu.
- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house (for example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that is possible). Keep the sickroom door closed.
- Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they must be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- Maintain good ventilation in shared household areas.

How serious is H1N1 flu?

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. The current outbreak includes confirmed human cases of H1N1 flu in states across the nation. Internationally, cases of H1N1 flu have been confirmed in several countries.

When will guidelines, as they pertain to school and daycare, be distributed?

Guidance for daycare providers is available at the Oregon State Health Division H1N1 flu Web site at www.flu.oregon.gov/ Additional information is also available at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents.htm.



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Check us out on the Web:
www.oregon.gov/das/oebb

Official newsletter of the
Oregon Educators
Benefit Board

Carrier Contacts
Kaiser Permanente:
866-223-2375

ODS Health Plan:
866-923-0409

Providence Health Plan:
800-878-4445

Willamette Dental:
800-460-7644

Information to Remember ...

The following links will lead you to Web pages that you may find helpful if you'd like to learn more about the Board and the programs being offered.

Frequently Asked Questions:
<https://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OEBB/frequentlyaskedquestions>

OEBB Web site:
<http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OEBB>