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General questions: Perrin Damon, (503) 931-4300, Patty Wentz, (503) 932-6243

Technical questions:

H1N1 swine influenza update: May 6, 2009

Cases:

As of Wednesday, Oregon public health officials had received confirmation of 45 cases of H1N1 swine flu.

Because the Oregon state public health lab now has the capacity to test in-house for the H1N1 swine flu virus, the up tick in cases today is attributed to rapid testing. Once a specimen is received, it takes the lab approximately 24 hours to test for the influenza virus.

One teenage girl remains hospitalized and continues to recover. The balance of the people are recovering or have recovered at home.

Of the 45 cases, 20 children, nine teens and 16 adults have been confirmed to have H1N1 swine flu. Twenty-one are males and 24 are females. Thirty additional specimens continue to be tested at the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory in Hillsboro.

The 45 cases break out by county as follows:

Clackamas – 1
Lane – 8
Marion - 4
Multnomah – 11
Polk – 16
Umatilla – 2
Washington – 3

New developments:

Epidemiologists with the Oregon Public Health Division continue to track the progression of H1N1 swine flu cases throughout the state, working with hospitals and county health departments.

They have noted and are investigating the root causes of the number of cases confirmed in Polk County.

“In flu outbreaks, it is not unusual to see different areas of impact across the state,” explained Dr. Mel Kohn, head of Oregon’s Public Health Division. “Polk County is one of those areas now, but that may change over time as this outbreak continues.

“We cannot stress enough to Oregonians the importance of continuing to take sensible precautions to protect themselves from the H1N1 swine flu or any other influenza virus by washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and washing your hands again,” he said.

As has been previously noted, the H1N1 swine 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.

Precautions

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 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.