



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama reports five additional probable cases & first confirmed case of H1N1 (swine) flu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—4:30 p.m

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces five additional probable cases of H1N1 (swine) influenza from Madison County and Alabama's first case of H1N1 influenza confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This makes a total of eight probable cases plus one confirmed case. One of the probable cases is in an adult resident of Montgomery County, and the remainder of the cases are residents of Madison County who are associated with the Madison City Schools.

The first two probable cases announced were identified as students attending Heritage Elementary School in the City of Madison, the third case was from Montgomery, and the fourth case also was a Heritage Elementary student.

More than 200 specimens have been submitted from health care providers to the Department of Public Health laboratories. Because of the increased demand being placed on the health department, additional evaluation equipment is being purchased to increase capacity. The health department is working with the CDC to expedite the confirmation process. The health department laboratory is prioritizing specimens based on the symptoms of the patients.

The ADPH is positioning antiviral medications and other supplies to local areas to be released as needed. All persons are reminded to follow these precautions:

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a sleeve or tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose with your hands.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. Patients experiencing severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment.

Prescription antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu and Relenza provide effective treatment and should be taken within the first 48 hours of illness.

The Alabama Department of Public Health does not recommend cancelling large group events based on concerns of H1N1 flu. Individuals should try to curtail the spread of influenza by realizing the virus is circulating in the population. Individuals who are ill should not attend group events to avoid spreading the virus to others. Persons with underlying medical conditions which would put them at greater potential risk are also advised to avoid group events.

“Those with underlying medical conditions may want to avoid large group gatherings,” Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said. “We control our own individual risk of acquiring infection. If you are a parent, we encourage you to keep sick children home from school and other activities until they are well and to follow their doctors’ recommendations.”

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people appear to be similar to the symptoms of regular human influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. Ill persons should voluntarily isolate themselves from others for seven days after they experience symptoms. Close contacts should limit their contact with others for a period of seven days from the time they were exposed.

The incubation period from the moment of exposure to H1N1 flu until symptoms develop is two to seven days. Individuals are infectious to others one day before until seven days after symptoms develop. Persons who develop symptoms of respiratory illness should contact their medical provider who can arrange for tests to determine whether the disease is due to swine flu.

H1N1 influenza virus is a respiratory infection caused by influenza type A viruses that typically cause outbreaks of influenza in pigs. People do not normally get H1N1 flu, but human infections can occur. Human cases typically involve people who have had direct contact with pigs, but person-to-person transmission is suspected among recent cases.

For information about H1N1 (swine) flu, please visit www.adph.org.