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SOLANO HEALTH OFFICIALS CONFIRM NINE NEW H1N1 CASES

Solano Public Health officials announced 9 newly confirmed cases of the H1N1/Swine Flu virus today, bringing the total confirmed cases to date to 10. The new cases are from multiple cities in the county, not limited to one geographic area. To date, there have been no deaths due to H1N1 in Solano County.

The people affected in the new cases range in age from 6 to 32 years old, with an average age of approximately 19 years old. Three cases are from Vacaville, 3 from Fairfield, 1 from Travis Air Force Base, 2 from Vallejo, and the prior case from Benicia.

“The new cases this week reflect current H1N1 activity in our communities, and do not reflect a delay in receiving test results that was experienced in April and May due to the intense demands placed on health department, State, and CDC laboratories,” said Ronald W. Chapman, MD, MPH, Solano Public Health Officer.

“While most of the cases have been relatively mild, one child was hospitalized in an intensive care unit (ICU) for a period of time,” said Dr. Chapman. “The child’s condition has since improved and while still hospitalized, the child is no longer in ICU.”

“There is no evidence so far that this virus has mutated (genetically changed) yet, and there is no evidence that the H1N1 flu is more severe than when first identified in April. However, it is important to understand that people are getting sick, some severely, and sadly eight people have died in California from H1N1,” said Dr. Chapman.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), eleven states are reporting widespread flu activity, which is very unusual for this time of year. The CDC reports that pandemic H1N1 outbreaks are ongoing in parts of the United States, in some places with intense activity.

As of June 18 in California, there are 1,317 reported cases, with 8 deaths. As of June 19, CDC reports 21,449 confirmed and probable infections with H1N1, with 87 deaths in the United States. As of the same date, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports a total of 44,287 cases in 95 countries and territories, with 180 deaths.

It is not known how widespread and severe the pandemic H1N1 virus will be during the 2009-10 influenza season in the United States. The CDC is still learning about the severity of the virus and is studying the characteristics of the virus. In addition, CDC and WHO are watching the Southern Hemisphere very carefully to see how the pandemic H1N1 affects their influenza season, which is just beginning there as they enter their winter season.

In the United States, an H1N1 vaccine is in production for release in fall of 2009, and Solano Public Health officials will keep the community apprised of when and where the vaccine will be available, as more information is obtained.

“Since we do not know how the pandemic H1N1 virus will interact with regular seasonal flu in the upcoming fall and winter, it is good to prepare yourself and your family now,” said Dr. Chapman. Families are encouraged to plan ahead, with one step being to talk about how loved ones would be cared for if they got sick. Prepare how you would be able to take time off work if you or someone you provide care for is ill or if your child’s school is dismissed to limit the spread of influenza.

Everyone is encouraged to follow common sense, everyday approaches to reduce the spread of germs:

- cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve
- wash your hands regularly with soap and water
- if you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further
- limit your contact with others

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- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as germs spread this way
- do not send your children to day care or social events if they are ill.

“These personal hygiene measures, when practiced regularly, have been shown to be very successful in reducing the spread of pandemics and regular seasonal flu and illnesses,” said Dr. Chapman.

For more information, the California Department of Public Health has a bilingual hotline at 1(888) 865-0564, which is available from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends, or visit www.solanocounty.com/publichealth; www.cdc.gov; and www.who.int.

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