
Press Release

NEWS

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Physicians and Public Urged to be on Watch for Swine Flu

The Burlington County Health Department (BCHD) has issued an alert to physicians to be on the watch for A/H1N1 (swine flu) virus in humans.

As of today, 40 cases of swine flu have been confirmed in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The confirmed cases are in California, Texas, New York City, Ohio and Kansas. All have recovered. There are an undetermined number of cases in Mexico with deaths reported.

“The Burlington County Health Department is on alert,” said Robert Gogats, Health Officer for Burlington County “We are working closely with state and federal officials to monitor the situation. We are requesting when doctors examine patients with febrile influenza-like illness, they should collect a specimen for testing. The illness that we are seeing in the United States currently is not severe. All ill persons have recovered. There is the possibility that we will see severe illness in the future, and we want Burlington County to be prepared.”

Gogats provided these recommendations for the public:

- As always, people with respiratory illness should stay home from work or school to avoid spreading infections, including influenza, to others in the community.
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently to lessen the spread of respiratory illness
- Pneumonia shot for those over 65 and anyone with a chronic condition. Check with your healthcare provider if you are unsure if you have had the shot or need one.

(more)

The symptoms of swine flu in humans are similar to the symptoms of seasonal influenza and include: fever greater than 100 degrees, coughing, sore throat, chills, headache and body aches, fatigue, respiratory congestion, and in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting. People experiencing these symptoms should stay home.

If you think you have been exposed or have mild symptoms please contact your healthcare provider. However, if you are experiencing life threatening symptoms please seek emergency medical care.

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

- 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 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

Strongly Recommend Home Isolation of Cases:

- Persons who develop influenza-like-illness (ILI) (fever with either cough or sore throat) should be strongly encouraged to self-isolate in their home for 7 days after the onset of illness or at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer. Persons who experience ILI and wish to seek medical care should contact their health care providers to report illness (by telephone or other remote means) before seeking care at a clinic, physician's office, or hospital. Persons who have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath or are believed to be severely ill should seek immediate medical attention.
- If ill persons must go into the community (e.g., to seek medical care) they should wear a face mask to reduce the risk of spreading the virus in the community when they cough, sneeze, talk or breathe. If a face mask is unavailable, ill persons needing to go into the community should use a handkerchief or tissues to cover any coughing.
- Persons in home isolation and their household members should be given infection control instructions: including frequent hand washing with soap and water. Use alcohol-based hand gels (containing at least 60% alcohol) when

soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty. When the ill person is within 6 feet of others at home, the ill person should wear a face mask if one is available and the ill person is able to tolerate wearing it.

Regarding Household Contacts:

- Household contacts who are well should:
- remain home at the earliest sign of illness;
- minimize contact in the community to the extent possible;
- designate a single household family member as the ill person's caregiver to minimize interactions with asymptomatic persons.

People with swine flu who are cared for at home should:

- check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
- check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- stay home for 7 days after the start of illness and fever is gone
- get plenty of rest
- drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- be watchful for emergency warning signs that might indicate you need to seek medical attention

Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food and a person cannot get swine influenza from eating pork products. The infection appears to spread from person to person. Drugs called antivirals can reduce the severity of illness, if taken within 48 hours after symptoms begin. Antivirals are not to be confused with flu vaccinations. Influenza vaccinations prevent a person from contracting the disease. Antivirals help treat people that become sick.

The main way that influenza viruses are thought to spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Influenza viruses may also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.

For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/swineflu or www.co.burlington.nj.us.