

Please see public health alert below regarding human infection with a novel swine influenza A H1N1 virus.

Commercial and hospital labs should send samples that are positive for influenza A to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories for PCR testing to determine the subtype of the virus.

In the event that a specimen is submitted, please notify local public health immediately at 766-7960 or after hours at 398-2083.

**This is an Official
Washington State Department of Health
ALERT**

Distributed via Health Alert Network

Date: Friday, April 24, 2009

DOH HAN Message ID: DOH-04-24-2009-A

CDC confirmed human influenza infections with a novel swine influenza A H1N1 virus in California (San Diego and Imperial Counties) and Texas (Guadalupe County). Illness onsets were at the end of March through mid-April. One was hospitalized and all have recovered completely. Cases were detected through routine influenza surveillance. It is assumed person-to-person transmission is occurring. None have had contact with ill pigs or other ill animals.

The isolated viruses are nearly identical and are not similar to any swine influenza virus previously isolated in North America. Preliminary laboratory work suggests that this year's existing vaccine is not a good match for this virus.

CDC and Canadian labs have confirmed this novel swine influenza H1N1 from cases of influenza-like illnesses occurring in Mexico during the same time period. Although deaths due to a respiratory illness have been reported in Mexico, it is unknown if any of these are due to influenza virus or this novel influenza virus.

The symptoms are the same as seasonal influenza – upper respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, runny nose, and muscle aches. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been noted. The duration and severity of illness does not appear to be different from the seasonal influenza A and B viruses, which are still circulating in Washington — although declining. Surveillance has not detected a recent increase in influenza-like illnesses in California or Texas.

Healthcare providers should consider possible influenza virus infection in cases of:

- Influenza-like illness in persons who recently traveled to affected areas (California, Texas, and Mexico)
- Influenza-like illness and contact with an ill person who had travel in the last week to affected areas of California, Texas, and Mexico

- Hospitalization with febrile lower respiratory tract disease

The health care provider should contact the local health jurisdiction if a case of swine influenza is suspected.

Influenza testing through commercial and hospital laboratories is strongly encouraged for persons in these categories. These testing recommendations may change and, in the future, healthcare providers may be asked to test more widely. This includes obtaining a nasopharyngeal swab or wash and testing these samples commercially. Health care providers should use appropriate respiratory protection when obtaining specimens. Commercial and hospital labs should send samples that are positive for influenza A to the Washington State Public Health Laboratories for PCR testing to determine the subtype of the virus. Because this novel virus is influenza A-positive and cannot be subtyped using routine methods, we will be able to identify samples that are more likely to be this novel virus. These will be sent to CDC.

Physicians who decide to treat an illness that may be due to influenza (i.e., influenza-like illness, severe acute respiratory infections, pneumonia) should follow CDC's guidelines (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/recommendations.htm>). This includes oseltamivir and rimantidine or zanamivir alone.

Guidance documents are being prepared by CDC for infection control in health care settings, use of antiviral medications, and protocols for lab workers. This is an evolving situation so check the CDC website for the most current information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/>

Advice to Persons with Respiratory Illness

All persons should follow respiratory hygiene recommendations:

- Wash hands frequently, particularly before or after touching the nose or mouth
- Stay home while ill with respiratory symptoms and fever
- Cover coughs and sneezes