



News Release

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Utah Public Health Officials on the Lookout for Swine Flu

State also initiates order of supplies from Strategic National Stockpile

(Salt Lake City) – While no cases of swine influenza (H1N1) have been documented in Utah, public health officials are taking a proactive approach in order to be prepared for a possible outbreak. As of this afternoon, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting 20 cases of swine flu in five states – California, Texas, Ohio, Kansas and New York. In addition, CDC along with the World Health Organization is assisting the Mexican government in tracking an outbreak caused by the same swine influenza virus.

Earlier today, the United States Department of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency as a consequence of the outbreak. The declaration will assist public health officials in responding to the outbreak.

As a precaution, the UDOH has initiated the process of ordering 25 percent of the state's pro-rated share of anti-viral medications and other supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile. State and local health officials are coordinating their response with Gov. Jon Huntsman, the Utah Department of Public Safety, as well as other federal government partners.

“Even though we don't have any cases in Utah, this is still a situation where we need to be on high alert, but not to panic,” said Utah Department of Health Executive Director Dr. David Sundwall. “The UDOH has increased its disease surveillance efforts and asks that all physicians be on the lookout for patients who may be exhibiting flu-like symptoms and report them to public health officials.”

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Symptoms may include fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat or cough; some patients may also have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. The UDOH recommends people who have flu symptoms remain home and limit contact with others unless the severity of illness requires medical care. Physicians who see these patients should collect specimens, such as a nasal swab, and submit them for testing at the Utah Public Health Laboratory.

It's also important for individuals to realize the swine flu virus is not transmitted by food and that you cannot get swine flu from eating pork products.

"We recognize that it is difficult to foresee the extent to which Swine Influenza A will affect our local communities," said Lloyd Berentzen, Health Officer for the Bear River Health Department and President of the Utah Local Health Officers Association.

"Because of this uncertainty it is important that we ramp up our awareness and preparedness practices. We will do all we can to protect our communities and empower individuals to know what they can do."

Public health officials also stressed the importance of the public's cooperation and participation in preventing an outbreak and offered the following tips:

- As is the case with any respiratory illness, people who are sick should stay home from work or school to avoid spreading their infection,
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or ill,
- Cover your cough with your shirt sleeve,
- If you are sick, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth if possible,
- Everyone should wash their hands frequently.

The CDC has created a web site with more information on the swine flu, visit www.cdc.gov/swineflu for more information.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.