



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Additional probable influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) cases identified

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces additional probable cases of influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) have been identified, including three cases in children from Montgomery County. As of May 8, Alabama has 31 cases, four of which have been confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The age range of H1N1 cases is from 4 to 41, with a median age of 7. Twenty-five of the state's 31 probable cases are under 13 years of age. Of the 23 cases in Madison County, 21 are children under 13 years of age and there is one adult elementary school teacher. The onset of symptoms of the first case of influenza A H1N1 in Alabama was April 22.

Of all probable and confirmed cases, 23 individuals are residents of Madison County, 4 of Montgomery County, 1 of Jefferson County, 1 of Pike County, 1 of Shelby County, and 1 of Limestone County.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "There is no reason to believe the outbreak is over, but we are pleased that in Alabama there have been no hospitalizations or deaths. We have tested samples from all geographic regions, and as we move forward we are likely to see more disease. In the influenza pandemics of 1918, 1957 and 1968 there were mild, late season spikes in novel viruses and the pandemic virus reoccurred in the fall."

The health department lab has obtained additional equipment to identify influenza A H1N1. This will enable the lab to quadruple its capacity to evaluate specimens submitted by the medical community. In the past two weeks more than 800 samples have been submitted to the state health department laboratory to screen for the H1N1 virus, and \$160,000 has been spent in equipment and supplies alone in the past two weeks. The public health laboratory now can process 120 to 180 samples per day.

CDC now recommends implementation of measures that focus on keeping all students, faculty and staff with symptoms of influenza out of schools and child care facilities during their period of illness when they are potentially infectious to others.

Students and faculty with influenza-like illness should stay home and not attend school or go into the community except to seek medical care for at least seven days, even if symptoms resolve sooner. The child with symptoms should return to school or day care only after being well for at least 24 hours. Students or staff who appear to have influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during a school day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home.

The Alabama Department of Public Health does not recommend cancelling large group events based on concerns of H1N1 influenza. 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.

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

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of traditional influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 influenza. 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 influenza 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 H1N1 flu.

For information about H1N1 influenza, please visit www.adph.org.