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H1N1 Influenza Still Increasing in Community

Health Officials Say 120 Cases in the City; Many More Suspected

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) is asking for the full cooperation of the community in order to slow the spread of H1N1 influenza throughout the city.

Health officials say that even if the new virus is no more severe than regular, seasonal influenza, many people around the country and within Milwaukee will likely be hospitalized as a result of the infection.

“Even though swine influenza in the US does not appear to be as severe as the early reports in Mexico indicated, and even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now feels it is not severe enough to warrant automatic school closure, it is clear that swine influenza potentially poses a serious threat,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker.

As of Wednesday, there are 120 probable and confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza within the city of Milwaukee. Six of those have been confirmed so far. Because improved laboratory tests are now coming on-line in Milwaukee and Madison, the City of Milwaukee Health Department expects the number of confirmed cases to rise rapidly over the next several days. So far, the CDC has found that almost all probable cases will become confirmed.

“Remember that the number of probable and confirmed cases represents just the tip of the iceberg,” Commissioner Baker said. “There are many more individuals who have swine flu but have not been tested.”

Health officials again stressed their recommendation that any person in Milwaukee who has symptoms consistent with influenza stay home from work or school to help slow the spread of disease. Persons with symptoms should also consult with their healthcare provider. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, and runny or stuffy nose.

Some ways to stay healthy and to protect yourself and those around you from getting the flu include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your upper sleeve. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use.
- Use your own drinking cups and straws.
- Avoid being exposed to people who are sick with flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Eat nutritious meals, get plenty of rest and do not smoke.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (i.e., door knobs, refrigerator handle, telephone, faucets)

To learn more about swine influenza, visit <http://pandemic.wisconsin.gov/> or www.milwaukee.gov/health.

Or visit us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MKEhealth> or in Spanish at <http://twitter.com/MKEsalud>.

Residents can also dial 2-1-1 to have their questions about swine flu answered in both English and Spanish.