



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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First probable swine flu cases identified in Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces the detection of two probable cases of swine flu in students attending Heritage Elementary School in the City of Madison. The children were seen by a local doctor for respiratory symptoms and were treated as outpatients.

Preliminary information indicates other children in the school have respiratory illness. The department is working with local city and county governmental officials and the local school district to investigate the situation further. Based on a report, there is similar illness among classmates.

It is recommended that the school be closed for a period of time until seven days have passed since the last ill student's recovery. Ill persons should voluntarily isolate themselves from others for seven days after they became ill. Close contacts should limit their contact with others for a period of seven days since they were exposed.

The incubation period from the moment of exposure to swine flu 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 swine flu.

Antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu and Relenza are available by prescription. They are effective in this disease if the patient starts to take them within the first 48 hours of illness. All persons are reminded to follow these precautions in day care centers, schools and homes:

- 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 seek health care and treatment.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "With the reports coming from other states and countries in the world, unfortunately, it is not surprising that we have detected probable cases in Alabama. At this point I'm grateful that no one in Alabama has yet required hospitalization, but I

am concerned we will continue to see additional cases, some of which may be more severe. The department, governmental officials and the news media are working to reduce the impact of this epidemic as much as possible.”

Swine influenza virus is a respiratory infection caused by influenza type A viruses that typically cause outbreaks of influenza in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can occur. Human cases typically involve people who have had direct contact with pigs, but person-to-person transmission is suspected among recent cases.

Swine influenza cannot be transmitted from eating pork or pork products. The symptoms of swine flu in people appear to be similar to the symptoms of regular human influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. As with seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Updates for the news media will be held on a regular basis. For information about swine flu, please visit www.adph.org.

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4/29/09