

## **H1N1 (Swine Flu) Update –June 5, 2009**

**Current Status:** The outbreak of the novel H1N1 flu strain (previously known as the “Swine Flu”) continues to evolve. As of today, there have been 480 confirmed cases of the H1N1 virus among Connecticut residents -fifty two percent are male and forty eight percent are female. The ages range from 2 months - 79 years (average 18 years). Six people are known to have been hospitalized - one person has died. Most people have symptoms similar to the seasonal flu (cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, fever, chills and tiredness). Confirmed cases are from the following counties: Fairfield (307), Hartford (45), Litchfield (3), Middlesex (4), New Haven (93), New London (7), and Tolland (20). There have been one confirmed cases of a Bristol resident. The person has mild symptoms and is getting better.

Since the last update on May 19, we have received a number of additional calls about the H1N1 virus. Responses to some of the more common questions follow.

**Is the H1N1 flu most serious than the seasonal flu?** While it is not possible yet to predict how serious this virus will be in the future, at this point, the H1N1 virus has been relatively mild. Each year in the United States, approximately 36,000 people die from flu-related complications. Most of the deaths and many of the hospitalizations are in persons older than 65. To compare, as of today, there have been 13,217 confirmed cases in the United States and 27 deaths.

**How does the H1N1 virus spread?** It is likely that this virus is spread in the same way as the seasonal flu. Flu is usually passed from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people who have the virus. That is why regular hand washing and covering of the mouth and nose when coughing/sneezing are so important.

**How long is an infected person contagious?** At the current time, experts believe that people may be contagious with this virus from one day before they develop symptoms to up to seven (7) days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, may be contagious for longer periods.

**Can a person get infected by eating certain food or drinking water?** The virus is not spread through food. You can not get sick from eating pork or pork products. Tap water that is properly treated is also safe.

**What can you do to protect yourself get sick?** There is no vaccine right now to protect against the H1N1virus. Other methods to help reduce the chances of getting sick include: reducing the amount of time spent in crowded settings, improve airflow in your living/working space by opening windows, and practicing good health habits such as adequate sleep, good nutrition, and physical exercise. Wash your hands often with soap and water or a alcohol-based hand cleaner (sanitizer) The sanitizer does not need water to work. You need only to rub your hands until the gel is dry. If you are caring for an ill person and are in close contact with them, you should also consider using a mask.

**What should you do if you do get sick with flu symptoms?** You should stay home and stay away from work, school or crowds, rest and take plenty of fluids; cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing. Clean your hands often. ***However,*** if you have severe symptoms or are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care if the situation is urgent. Urgent medical attention is needed if you have fast breathing or have trouble breathing, have bluish or gray skin, have frequent vomiting or have symptoms that do not get better.

L. Abrahamson, June 5, 2009, 4:30 p.m ET