



Tom Barrett
Mayor

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Commissioner of Health

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Third H1N1 Death Reported in Milwaukee

Health officials stress that people with respiratory symptoms should stay home

Milwaukee health officials have confirmed another death from the novel H1N1 influenza infection. This is the third known death from novel H1N1 for the city and for Wisconsin, and was an adolescent who apparently did not have any of the common underlying medical conditions that typically make people more at risk of influenza complications. The City of Milwaukee Health Department has previously reported two adult deaths from the virus.

"I've stated before that this is a new virus, to which nobody has any immunity, and for which there is currently no vaccine," said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. "Please stay home if you're experiencing signs of respiratory illness such as fever, cough, or sore throat. Do not go to work or school."

Swine flu spreads person to person when a person infected with the flu coughs or sneezes and the uninfected person breathes in the virus. Staying home when ill is very important to prevent exposing high-risk individuals, such as pregnant women or people with weak immune systems, to this new virus.

"Swine influenza is a serious illness that remains widespread in our community," said Mayor Tom Barrett. "I once again urge everyone to follow the recommendations given by the Health Department to slow the spread of this disease in our community."

As of Tuesday, there more than 2,000 confirmed cases of swine flu reported in Milwaukee. MHD expects this number to increase due to continued spread of the disease in the community as well as the department's continued surveillance and testing for this disease. As the total number of cases rise, the number of hospitalizations and deaths can also be expected to rise locally as well as nationally.

Conditions that make people more at risk for complications of influenza include: age of 65 or older, age under 5, pregnancy, diabetes, lung problems including asthma and emphysema, certain heart conditions, diseases or medications that weaken the immune system, kidney diseases, children on chronic aspirin treatment, and some other chronic medical problems.

It's also important to remember that influenza can be fatal even to healthy individuals, although they are at lower risk than those with underlying illness. Therefore, people with respiratory illness whose condition seems to be worsening should not delay in being seen by a medical professional.

Health officials again stressed that mildly ill individuals whose condition is not worsening should call their doctor to find out if antiviral treatment is needed. If you are only mildly ill, it is better to call your doctor first, as some situations can be managed by phone. Mildly ill individuals should not go to the emergency department unless instructed to do so by your doctor.

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.

As previously reported, MHD has partnered with researchers from the Harvard University School of Public Health to study data generated from the outbreak response in the City of Milwaukee. Since early in the outbreak, the number of cases in Milwaukee has been consistently higher than what has been confirmed in most other US states.

The collaboration with Harvard researchers will assist Milwaukee public health officials in better characterizing the magnitude and spread of disease in the community, as well as study transmissibility patterns in clustered settings such as households and schools. This information in turn may provide validation on whether the high number of confirmed cases in the City is related to early enhanced surveillance by the MHD, aggressive testing and excellent laboratory capacity locally and state-wide, earlier exposure and more widespread disease than other municipalities, or some other variables.

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>.