



Public Health Update- H1N1 Influenza

June 9, 2009

The Southern Nevada Health District received confirmation of 48 novel H1N1 cases in Clark County, as of Friday, June 5. There have been no deaths. The health district posts updated case counts weekly, each Tuesday before noon. The next update will be posted Tuesday, June 16. To date, the severity of illness caused by the novel H1N1 virus is similar to seasonal flu.

The Southern Nevada Health District performs influenza surveillance year round. Currently, the traditional influenza season has ended and results received by the health district from rapid influenza testing will no longer be classified as cases because the accuracy of rapid testing decreases when flu is not as widespread in the community. This change in reporting will likely lead to a decrease in the total number of positive influenza test results.

Cases of H1N1 are confirmed using a more reliable testing method and these numbers are likely to remain at a consistent level, but might represent more of the total positive cases reported due to the change in reporting of seasonal flu cases.

The health district is no longer investigating all positive novel H1N1 test results and cases therefore will no longer have specific information regarding cases, such as age or sex. As part of its surveillance, the health district will only investigate novel H1N1 cases if the patient is hospitalized or severely ill.

Initial testing recommendations were made to identify if novel H1N1 influenza virus was present in the community. As novel H1N1 influenza cases have been identified locally, the health district has adopted CDC-recommended testing protocols to test only hospitalized or seriously ill patients to track the virus' severity in the community. Some health care providers are continuing to test mildly ill patients for the flu and the health district is receiving results from several local labs as well as the state public health laboratory in Reno.

Current recommendations to the public encourage good health habits to minimize the spread of influenza:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Individuals who become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea may want to contact their health care provider.

Updated information is available on the Southern Nevada Health District website, www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention site, www.cdc.gov. In addition, the Nevada Helpline is available in English and Spanish, (1-866) 767-5038 or (702) 759-INFO (4636).