



Public Health Update- H1N1 Influenza

June 23, 2009

The Southern Nevada Health District received confirmation of 80 novel H1N1 cases in Clark County, as of Friday, June 19. The health district posts updated case counts weekly, each Tuesday before noon. The next update will be posted Tuesday, June 30. To date, the severity of illness caused by the novel H1N1 virus is similar to seasonal flu. The health district reported an H1N1-related death in Clark County; however, because the patient resided in another state, she is not included in the confirmed novel H1N1 case count for Nevada.

The Southern Nevada Health District performs influenza surveillance year round. Recently, the health district began a voluntary pediatric influenza surveillance program at four pediatric clinics to enable the health district to monitor the presence of influenza virus in the community during the summer and to enable early detection of its return in the fall. A majority of cases recently reported are generated by the pediatric surveillance program. None of these cases have been severe.

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. However, healthcare providers can order H1N1 testing from commercial laboratories and these results are reported to the health district.

Cases of novel 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 stressing that a recommendation to close public venues or schools is not warranted at this time. Individuals who are ill should avoid traveling or attending public events to minimize the spread of influenza or any other infectious illness.

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).