

FactSheet

Para Su Información

2009 H1N1 Flu

An Informational Guide for Law Enforcement

2009 H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. As of the week ending Sept. 25, 2009, the Southern Nevada Health District reports 54 new cases and 447 cumulative cases of 2009 H1N1 in Clark County, with 11 deaths.

The following information is provided as an interim guideline for law enforcement personnel.

Why is 2009 H1N1 virus sometimes called “swine flu”?

This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia, bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a “quadruple reassortant” virus.

Symptoms

The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with 2009 H1N1 flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Infectious Period

People infected with 2009 H1N1 flu should be considered potentially contagious for up to seven days following illness onset. Anyone displaying symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu as described above should be considered potentially contagious until symptoms have resolved. Further information on the infectious period of this particular flu will be shared as it becomes available.

Impact on Law Enforcement

The Southern Nevada Health District has issued updated guidelines for EMS personnel. It is important to remember that these guidelines are for medical first responders and are not applicable to general law enforcement activities. The EMS dispatch centers will begin screening callers for signs and symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu. The following guidelines for law enforcement personnel are recommended if dispatched to a medical call where medical personnel suspect a possible case of 2009 H1N1 flu:

- Officers should limit unnecessary contact with the patient.
- Officers should wear a surgical mask if within three feet of the patient.
- Officers should immediately wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer prior to returning to service.
- Officers MAY place a surgical mask, if available, on a patient/suspect.

(continued)

Personnel should continue to use good personal hygiene practices:

- 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 sanitizers 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 a flu-like illness, stay home from work and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Additional Information

If you want to learn more about 2009 H1N1 flu, additional information is available from the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>, the World Health Organization at www.who.int and the health district at www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org.

Primary source: Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for Management of Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Swine-Origin Influenza A (H1N1) Infection

*Reviewed and approved for release by:
Joseph J. Heck, DO, FACOEP, FACEP, Medical Director, LVMPD
and Lawrence Sands, DO, MPH, Chief Health Officer*



625 Shadow Lane | P.O. Box 3902
Las Vegas, NV 89127 | 702.759.1000
www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

Updated 09-30-09