

Swine Influenza in the United States

DATE: April 24, 2009
TO: Health Alert Network
FROM: Everette James
Secretary of Health
SUBJECT: **Swine Influenza in the United States**

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This transmission is a “Health Alert”, conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

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LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

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PROFESSIONAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP AS APPROPRIATE

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) is releasing the following important information about the recent detection of human illness due to swine influenza in southern California and Texas. PADOH is asking clinicians to consider this diagnosis in persons presenting with influenza-like illness (ILI) who have a recent history of travel to or from these areas or Mexico, and to notify your local health department of such cases and collect appropriate specimens for testing from such individuals.

Background:

On April 17, 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health confirmed swine influenza in two unrelated individuals in southern California caused by infection with a previously unidentified swine influenza A (H1N1) virus. Since then, four additional cases have been reported in southern California and two cases have been reported from a location near San Antonio Texas:

- Four cases of human infection with swine influenza have been detected in San Diego and Imperial County in the State of California.

- Two cases of human infection with swine influenza have been confirmed in Guadalupe County, near San Antonio, Texas.
- The first two human infections with swine influenza were reported by CDC on April 21.
- Three additional California cases were laboratory confirmed by CDC on April 22.
- The two cases in Texas were laboratory confirmed by CDC on April 23.
- All of these cases presented with signs and symptoms typical of influenza and only one of the seven individuals was hospitalized. Two of the cases are in a father and daughter and the two cases in Texas are in the same classroom, suggesting person-to-person transmission. None of these individuals had a history of pig exposure. All have recovered.
- Human-to-human spread of swine flu viruses has been documented in the past; however, it has not previously been documented beyond third generation transmission.
- In-state testing determined that the samples were influenza A positive, but the influenza virus subtype of the sample could not be determined through testing available in-state. Whenever an influenza virus subtype cannot be determined, it is forwarded for further testing. CDC has conducted testing on all 7 samples and determined them to be swine influenza A (H1N1). These are human infections with swine influenza viruses; swine influenza viruses normally infect and cause illness in pigs.

The viruses from all seven cases are closely related genetically and contain a unique combination of gene segments that have not been reported in the United States or elsewhere. Viruses from 6 cases are all resistant to amantadine and rimantidine and sensitive to zanamivir and oseltamivir, and sensitivity testing is underway for the remaining virus.

Vaccination with seasonal influenza vaccine containing human influenza A (H1N1) would not be expected to provide protection against swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses.

In addition, swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses have also been confirmed by CDC from patients in Mexico. Mexico is reporting more than 800 human cases of influenza-like illness, including about 60 deaths.

Actions requested of all clinicians:

As a result of these findings, the PADOH is **requesting from clinicians** to consider the possibility of swine influenza virus infections in patients presenting with febrile respiratory illness and to do the following:

- A. Ascertain the patient's travel history in the 7 days prior to symptom onset. Identify patients who have:
 1. Been to Mexico or areas of the United States that border Mexico, particularly California and Texas; or
 2. Been in contact with ill persons who had been in these areas in the 7 days prior to their illness onset.

- B. Test such persons for influenza using routine testing procedures, including rapid test kits or submission to your usual laboratory.
- C. Immediately inform PADOH or your local health department of any patient with such a history whose laboratory test is positive for influenza A. The health department will inform you of how to submit these specimens for further analysis and subtyping.
- D. Because seasonal influenza-like illness activity is low at this time, please also inform your local health department of any individual with severe illness thought to be due to influenza (e.g. persons requiring hospitalization) for further investigation and collect appropriate specimens for influenza testing.

If swine flu is suspected, clinicians should obtain a respiratory swab for swine influenza testing and place it in a refrigerator (not a freezer). Once collected, the clinician should contact PADOH or their local health department (**Montgomery County Health Department 610-278-5117**) to facilitate transport and timely diagnosis at the PADOH Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) in Lionville.

Additional information on swine influenza is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/index.htm>. You can also access CDC's "Interim Guidance on Infection Control and Antiviral Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Swine Influenza A Virus Infection" at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm>

Seasonal influenza activity in Pennsylvania has significantly declined in recent weeks, and is currently considered to be local. Few influenza viruses are being identified in the Commonwealth at this time, although historically testing declines significantly in spring. Information on influenza in Pennsylvania can be found at <http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=171&q=246529>

The PADOH will continue to send out information regarding the swine flu situation as it becomes available, including updated locations and recommendations. There are currently no travel restrictions or other recommendations being made by the CDC regarding Mexico or border areas of the United States.

For additional information, you can contact your local health department (**Montgomery County Health Department 610-278-5117**) or call the PADOH at **1-877-PA-HEALTH**

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of April 24, 2009, but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.