

NEWS RELEASE



El Dorado County **HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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Update on H1N1 (Swine) Flu in El Dorado County **and Current Recommendations**

Hand washing and staying home when sick are still the best ways to prevent spread of the H1N1 flu

El Dorado County health officials are continuing to monitor H1N1 (swine) flu activity in the County and are reminding individuals that frequent hand washing and staying home when you are sick are still the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus. Health officials are also advising parents of school children and business owners to be prepared for a potentially tougher flu season this year than in years past.

“Since last May when the first case of H1N1 was reported in our county, we have continued to receive reports of cases throughout the summer,” said El Dorado County Health Officer, Dr. Olivia Kasirye. “With the fall and the regular flu season fast approaching, we are asking people who develop flu-like illness to stay home to reduce the spread of flu viruses and keep everyone healthier. If you or your child gets sick with a fever of 100 degrees or more, with a cough, you should stay home until your fever is gone for at least 24 hours. Employers need to be vigilant about telling employees to stay home if they are sick, and should send home any employee who develops flu symptoms.”

Dr. Kasirye adds that if a person has severe flu symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or dehydration from vomiting and/or diarrhea, they should seek medical advice. Pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions (such as a respiratory condition, immune disorder, or diabetes) should seek early medical care if they get the flu.

To date, there have been 23 confirmed cases of H1N1 infection in El Dorado County, although it is believed that more cases are circulating in the community. “The majority of H1N1 cases have been mild and similar to seasonal flu,” said Dr. Kasirye. “We are continuing to see that people with underlying medical conditions are most at risk.” There has been one H1N1 related death in El Dorado County in an individual who had underlying medical conditions.

According to Dr. Kasirye, the majority of questions now coming to the staff of the El Dorado County Health Services Department are about the availability of an H1N1 flu vaccine and whether schools will be closed if a case is reported.

“We are working closely with the State Department of Public Health to receive updates on vaccine production and distribution,” said Dr. Kasirye. “We expect to get the H1N1 flu vaccine in mid to late October at the earliest. In addition to our local health department, we anticipate that some health care providers in the community will have the H1N1 flu vaccine available. The initial allotment of vaccine is expected to be limited, so those who are at highest risk will be offered the vaccine first before it is made available to others. It is important to point out that the vaccine may not be recommended for everyone.”

Currently, health officials are not routinely closing schools where cases of seasonal flu and H1N1 infection are identified. “In most cases, schools should be able to remain open, however we are strongly urging children and school staff to stay home, or be sent home, if they develop flu symptoms and until their fever is gone for at least 24 hours. This will help keep other students and staff from becoming ill,” said Dr. Kasirye. Health and school officials will continue to monitor the situation, and if there is a need to close a school, parents will be notified. The Health Services Department currently has a Flu Watch system in place with local schools to track flu cases; school nurses send in weekly reports of student absences due to flu. “If a child misses school due to the flu, please let the school know so that it gets noted in the school’s flu report,” said Dr. Kasirye.

Health officials are continuing to closely coordinate with local health care providers, schools, surrounding county health departments and the State Department of Public Health on H1N1 (swine) flu activities and updates.

Information on H1N1 (swine) flu and seasonal flu Community Flu Shot Clinics is available online at www.edcgov.us/publichealth. The California Department of Public Health also has an active Swine Flu Hotline, with the option to speak with a live operator, at 1-888-865-0564.

Everyday Actions to Stay Healthy:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home from work or school until your fever is gone for at least 24 hours. Limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the used tissue in the trash.

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