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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT

www.kdheks.gov

Division of Health

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By now you are probably aware that human cases of swine influenza (H1N1) have been identified in Kansas as well as four additional states and internationally. This is a serious public health situation and we believe it is imperative that people be informed.

KDHE has dedicated space on its website (www.kdheks.gov) to provide updated information and resources on swine flu. KDHE has also established a phone number for concerned Kansans to call with questions about swine flu. The toll-free number is **1-877-427-7317** and will be operational **8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday**. Persons calling will be directed to press **“1”** on their touch-tone phone to be directed to an operator who will answer questions regarding swine flu.

Kansans with questions about swine flu can also email swinefluinfo@kdheks.gov.

In addition, we'd also like to share with you the following key facts about swine flu in Kansas. As of today, here is what we know:

1. **This is a new virus, never before recognized in the United States or anywhere in the world.** The new virus contains genetic pieces from flu viruses that infect pigs, birds and humans. It appears able to spread among humans like the familiar human flu viruses that circulate in our communities every winter. Because this virus is new, we believe that no one has natural immunity against it. Immunization with the seasonal flu vaccine is not likely to offer protection.
2. **Disease caused by the swine flu virus appears to be mild so far. Among the confirmed cases in the United States, only one has required hospitalization.** All have recovered, or are now showing signs of recovery. The ability of the virus to cause serious disease may change over time, or it may infect people who are less able to resist it effectively. There are reports of deaths associated with swine flu infections in Mexico.
3. **The disease is present in Kansas.** As of today, we are aware of two cases of swine flu in our state. One case followed a trip to Mexico. The other resulted from household contact with the returning traveler. Neither case required hospitalization and both are now recovering. State and local public health staff are currently working hard to identify additional cases and provide supporting laboratory work to characterize the extent of the outbreak in Kansas.

4. **Swine flu is treatable.** While the new virus is resistant to certain anti-viral medications, at the moment it remains sensitive to others. To be maximally effective in shortening the length and severity of illness, these medications should be prescribed by a physician early in the course of infection. As always, rest at home and drinking ample fluids is also essential for a complete recovery.
5. **Swine flu is preventable.** While there is no vaccine that specifically protects against the new virus, everyday steps that prevent the spread of germs are very effective in reducing the risk of catching this disease. These include washing your hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers, staying at least six feet away from people who are coughing and sneezing, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet and plenty of rest and exercise. Those who develop flu symptoms must stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible for a period of seven days from the onset of illness.
6. **We can beat this.** Your state and local public health professionals, together with Kansas health care providers, have been preparing and training for the arrival of a new flu virus in our communities for years. Working with colleagues at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we will monitor the activity of this new infectious agent and take all the necessary steps to curtail its spread. Your role in this is critical: to remain informed, to consult your health care provider if you become ill, and to follow the advice you receive on ways to protect your community. We will continue to update the KDHE swine flue web site (www.kdheks.gov) and encourage you to use it as a resource for swine flu information.

Thank you for your support as we work together to control this outbreak and protect the people of Kansas.

Yours sincerely,



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