

News Release

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Cluster of influenza-like illnesses in Montgomery area workers investigated

Novel H1N1 influenza confirmed in 3 cases

LeSueur County Public Health officials are working with local health care providers, including hospitals and clinics and the Minnesota Department of Health to investigate and respond to a cluster of influenza-like illnesses in workers at a food processing plant in Montgomery, Minnesota. To date, 3 cases of novel H1N1 influenza have been confirmed in the workers.

Local clinics and emergency departments report they have seen a higher than expected number of patients with influenza-like symptoms over the last several days.

Two people from Montgomery have been hospitalized with influenza-like illness.

Local health officials are following up to make sure those who have been ill stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after their fever resolves. Other steps, such as providing antiviral medications when necessary, are being taken to limit the spread of the illness among workers and members of the community.

The workers' employer, Seneca Foods, is cooperating fully with the response. They are providing assistance to their workers with medical needs and instructing ill workers to stay home. Le Sueur County Public Health applauds the management at Seneca Foods for their quick response, cooperation and concern with the health and well-being of their employees and the community.

"H1N1 continues to circulate in Minnesota, so we are not surprised to see occasional clusters of these illnesses in communities," says Cindy Shaughnessy, R.N, PHN, Director of Le Sueur County Public Health. "For example, clusters of illness have been reported in youth camps around Minnesota this summer."

It's important to note the H1N1 flu still appears to be behaving like seasonal influenza – most cases are mild to moderate. Most patients are able to fully recover with at home bed rest and proper treatment of symptoms (e.g. drinking plenty of fluids).

(More)

The best protections from H1N1 are the same measures health officials have been emphasizing since spring:

- Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- Clean your hands frequently and thoroughly – with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Limit your contact with others who may be ill
- Clean your hands after shaking hands or having other close contact with others, before eating or preparing food, or touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Stay home from work or school – and generally avoid going out in public – if you are sick with symptoms of the flu
- If you are severely ill with the flu, contact your health care provider – but take steps to avoid exposing others to the flu
 - Call first to see if you need to come in to see a health care provider at all
 - If you do need to see your provider, steps can be taken to avoid exposing other patients to the flu
- Be aware of the symptoms of novel H1N1 flu, which are similar to those for seasonal flu:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Body aches
 - Headache
 - Chills
 - Fatigue
 - In some cases, symptoms of novel H1N1 flu can also include vomiting and diarrhea – which are not typically symptoms of seasonal flu

“Each one of us, regardless if we develop flu-like symptoms or not, can help reduce the spread of the flu by following some simple, basic steps,” says Shaughnessy. “This is an opportunity for all of us to take an active role to help make the upcoming flu season as mild as possible”.

For more information on the H1N1 flu, go to the Minnesota Department of Health Web site, www.health.state.mn.us, and click on “H1N1 novel flu information”.