

Statement from Acting Surgeon General Steven K. Galson on the 2009 H1N1 Flu

On April 26, the Department of Health and Human Services issued a nationwide public health emergency declaration in response to recent human infections with a newly discovered 2009 H1N1 flu virus. As of April 29, there have been 91 human infections with this H1N1 virus in ten states, which include Arizona, California, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New York, Ohio, and Texas.

The 2009 H1N1 flu has been confirmed in Mexico, Spain, and Canada. Suspected cases are being investigated in the UK, Brazil, Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

The H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza among pigs. H1N1 flu viruses do not normally infect humans; however, human infections with H1N1 flu do occur, and cases of human-to-human spread of H1N1 viruses have been documented.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working very closely with officials in states where human cases of the 2009 H1N1 flu have been identified, as well as with health officials in Mexico, Canada, and the World Health Organization.

CDC has prepared interim guidance on how to care for people who are sick and interim guidance on the use of face masks in a community setting where spread of this 2009 H1N1 flu virus has been detected. This is a rapidly evolving situation and CDC will provide new information as it becomes available. This information can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>.

Investigations are ongoing to determine the source of the infection and whether additional people have been infected with H1N1 influenza viruses. This includes deploying staff domestically and internationally to provide guidance and technical support. CDC has activated its Emergency Operations Center to coordinate this investigation.

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with the H1N1 flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with the H1N1 flu infection in people.

In addition, the H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. CDC has determined that this H1N1 flu virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it not known how easily the virus spreads between people. The incubation period is 24 to 48 hours.

There are precautions consumers can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause influenza. If you feel sick, stay home from work or school and limit your contact with others. Call your doctor to talk about your symptoms.

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with others who may be sick.

As always our PHS officers stand ready to respond. Our officers are basic qualified for deployment. The Office of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD) have alerted the on-call

preconfigured teams of commissioned officers, individual on-call officers and have verified team rosters.

I encourage all of our officers to help educate people about the H1N1 flu and how to prevent the spread of germs. At a time like this it is important to educate the public and to not cause panic. HHS is taking these steps to be proactive in responding to this new influenza virus by offering national tools in support of community-led preparedness and response efforts. For more on the 2009 H1N1 flu, visit www.cdc.gov/swineflu.