

For Immediate Release:
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NEW INFORMATION

Florida Flu Information Line **1-877-352-3581**

On Monday, August 24th, Florida Department of Health launched a toll-free number to provide public health information and updates on H1N1 Swine flu. The information line is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EDT, seven days a week. Information is available in English, Spanish and Creole.

CURRENT SITUATION

To align our media updates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention schedule, we will send a media update each Wednesday noting any significant events that have taken place during the reporting period. Please note that following the lead of the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, we will no longer be collecting numbers of confirmed H1N1 Swine Flu cases.

Additional laboratory confirmed H1N1 Swine Flu deaths have been verified in that of the following: A 34-year-old male in Polk County, a 56-year-old female in Orange County, a 22-year-old female in Hillsborough County, a 57-year-old male in Miami-Dade County, a 50-year-old female in Miami-Dade County, a 24-year-old male in Miami-Dade County, and a 54-year-old male in Broward County. While most cases of H1N1 Swine Flu are mild, there are exceptions. Pre-existing health conditions often play a role in how individuals react to the flu. To-date, there have been 66 laboratory confirmed H1N1 Swine Flu deaths in Florida.

Our hearts and prayers go out to the family and friends of these individuals, " said Surgeon General Dr. Ana Viamonte Ros. "H1N1 Swine Flu, like seasonal flu, can in some circumstances be very serious, therefore, all of us should continue to adhere to good health practices including, stay home if sick, cover cough and sneeze, and wash hands frequently."

All four Department of Health laboratories have received testing supplies from the Center for Diseases Control and can test samples to confirm H1N1 Swine Flu. This testing capability allows the Department to expedite results as we no longer need to send probable cases to CDC laboratories.

The Department of Health continues its enhanced surveillance and outreach to physicians, hospitals, and other health care professionals. The surveillance system, consisting of sentinel physicians reporting influenza activity, DOH laboratories receiving specimens from physicians and hospitals, and our ability to monitor emergency room cases is fully operational. We have activated our response plan and are ready to respond if needed.

The World Health Organization (WHO) alert level is at Phase 6 "pandemic." The pandemic (WHO level 6) status is based on geographic distribution and not the severity of swine flu. In effect the WHO is saying that swine flu H1N1 is now circulating world-wide.

PRECAUTIONS

The State Surgeon General provided these recommendations:

People with respiratory illness should stay home from work or school to avoid spreading infections, including influenza, to others in the community.

- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently to lessen the spread of respiratory illness.

People experiencing cough, fever and fatigue, possibly along with diarrhea and vomiting, should contact their physician.

If you think you have influenza, please call your health care provider and discuss whether you need to be seen in their office, emergency department or stay home.