

One additional probable influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) case identified

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces one additional probable case of influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) has been identified in a child from Madison County. As of May 7, Alabama has 26 cases, four of which have been confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of all probable and confirmed cases, 22 individuals are residents of Madison County, 1 of Montgomery County, 1 of Jefferson County, 1 of Pike County and 1 of Shelby County.

Of the 22 cases in Madison County, 21 are children under 13 years of age and there is one adult elementary school teacher. The median age of all 26 cases is 6.5 years of age. The onset of symptoms of the first influenza A H1N1 in Alabama was April 22.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "The public health laboratory previously had two DNA extractors, one low volume and one high volume, and one PCR machine to conduct DNA testing on suspected H1N1 influenza virus. The health department has obtained another high-throughput, a second compact extractor and three additional PCR machines to expedite the testing for H1N1. Of the three new PCR systems, one has been verified and is operational, and the health department expects the other two to be evaluated and in production soon. This will enable the lab to quadruple its capacity to evaluate specimens submitted by the medical community."

CDC now recommends implementation of measures that focus on keeping all students, faculty and staff with symptoms of influenza out of schools and child care facilities during their period of illness when they are potentially infectious to others.

Students and faculty with influenza-like illness should stay home and not attend school or go into the community except to seek medical care for at

least seven days, even if symptoms resolve sooner. The child with symptoms

should return to school or day care only after being well for at least 24

hours. Students or staff who appear to have influenza-like illness at

arrival or become ill during a school day should be isolated promptly in a

room separate from other students and sent home.

The Alabama Department of Public Health does not recommend cancelling

large group events based on concerns of H1N1 influenza. Individuals should

try to curtail the spread of influenza by realizing the virus is circulating in the population. Individuals who are ill should not attend

group events to avoid spreading the virus to others. Persons with underlying medical conditions which would put them at greater potential

risk are also advised to avoid group events.

Prescription antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu and Relenza provide effective

treatment and should be taken within the first 48 hours of illness. All

persons are reminded to follow these precautions:

Cover your cough or sneeze with a sleeve or tissue.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or

sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.

Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose with your hands.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with

others to avoid infecting them. Patients experiencing severe symptoms,

such as difficulty breathing, should call their health care provider.

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of traditional

influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache,

chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting

associated with H1N1 influenza. Close contacts should limit their contact

with others for a period of seven days from the time they were exposed.

The incubation period from the moment of exposure to H1N1 influenza until

symptoms develop is two to seven days. Individuals are infectious to

others one day before until seven days after symptoms develop. Persons

who develop symptoms of respiratory illness should contact their medical

provider who can arrange for tests to determine whether the disease is due

to H1N1 flu.

For information about H1N1 influenza, please visit www.adph.org.