

Delaware General Health District

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NEWS RELEASE

WEEKLY INFLUENZA UPDATE FOR DELAWARE COUNTY

P.O. Box 570 1-3 W. Winter St. Delaware OH 43015
740-368-1700 FAX 740-368-1736 Web Site: www.delawarehealth.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information contact Jesse Carter, public information officer, at 740-203-2085.

DELAWARE, Oh., Sept. 17, 2009 – Here is the first weekly update on the flu situation in Delaware County. The Delaware General Health District will issue weekly updates to local news media throughout the upcoming flu season.

LOCAL CASES: During the week of Sept. 4-11, children age 6-11 were the age group most affected by influenza-like illnesses reported in Delaware County. Pockets of flulike illnesses occurred in the Delaware, Lewis Center, Powell, Sunbury, and Westerville ZIP codes.

SCHOOLS: All local schools are open and operating normally. Health District administrators recently met with local school leaders to discuss communications, absenteeism, and scenarios in which schools might need to close to prevent spread of flu. Children need to be kept home from school if they are sick, and households need to plan for this possibility.

SENTINEL SITES: Several local workplaces have agreed to regularly report absenteeism due to influenza-like illnesses to the Health District. This is always done with schools and daycare centers, and is being expanded this year due to the possibility of a severe flu season. Sales of over-the-counter medications are also being monitored.

H₁N₁ FLU TESTING PROTOCOL: Concerns have been voiced about limits on H₁N₁ flu testing. Since early August, the Ohio Department of Health laboratory has conducted H₁N₁ tests only when someone with symptoms is hospitalized or is suspected of being part of a cluster of cases. This allows Public Health experts to identify the most severe cases and outbreaks at a time when the disease is widespread. Treatment for a person with flu symptoms is the same for all types of flu, so no test is necessary in most cases.

SYMPTOMS: The symptoms of the pandemic H₁N₁ virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Diarrhea and vomiting have been reported by some people, mostly children.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

ANTIVIRALS: Antivirals are prescription drugs recommended to treat persons hospitalized with severe flu symptoms and persons with flu symptoms who are at greatest risk for complications. When taken early enough, antivirals can reduce the severity and shorten the duration of the illness and help prevent serious complications. Trade names of antivirals used to treat flu are Tamiflu and Relenza.