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BAY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

"CREATING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY"

April 27, 2009

Dominic Smith
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Bay County Health Department
1200 Washington Avenue
Bay City, Michigan 48708

Bay County Area Schools

Dear School Administration / Nurse:

The Bay County Health Department recognizes that school administrators, teachers, staff, and parents are concerned about the recent outbreak of Swine Influenza, particularly its effects on children. Schools are instrumental in keeping their communities healthy by taking actions such as, posting information about hand hygiene in restrooms, providing flu prevention messages in daily announcements, and being vigilant about cleaning and disinfecting classroom materials.

Human cases of Swine Influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified internationally and in the United States. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has determined that the Swine Influenza A (H1N1) virus currently circulating is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is monitoring and conducting enhanced influenza surveillance as a result of the swine flu outbreak in Mexico and confirmed cases in several states, including California, Texas, Kansas, Ohio and New York. While no cases have been confirmed in Michigan at this time, according to the CDC, 40 cases of swine flu have been confirmed in the U.S. to date.

The symptoms of swine 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 swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Spread of this Swine Influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

Educators and staff can help slow the spread of colds and flu. Always remind children to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after they use it.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or a student gets sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

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

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids.
- 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.
- Fever with a rash

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

Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food and a person cannot get swine influenza from eating pork products. The infections appear to spread from person to person. Drugs called antivirals can reduce the consequences of contracting the flu, if taken early. The Bay County Health Department is receiving frequent updates from the CDC, and is working with the Michigan Department of Community Health to monitor the situation and immediately follow up on any suspected cases. For more information on swine flu, please visit the CDC's website at: www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

Sincerely,

Dominic Smith
Community Health Educator / PIO



"Creating A Healthy Environment For The Community"

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Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

Fact Sheet

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. There also are flu antiviral drugs that can be used to treat and prevent the flu.

Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Stay home when you are sick.

Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

Clean your hands.

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.