



Public Health Update- H1N1 Influenza

June 16, 2009

The Southern Nevada Health District received confirmation of 57 novel H1N1 cases in Clark County, as of Friday, June 12. The health district posts updated case counts weekly, each Tuesday before noon. The next update will be posted Tuesday, June 23. To date, the severity of illness caused by the novel H1N1 virus is similar to seasonal flu. This case count includes four novel H1N1-confirmed samples from school children who were tested on Tuesday, June 9, to identify if an increase in absenteeism at a Clark County elementary school was caused by influenza or another virus.

On Friday, June 12, the health district reported the first novel H1N1-related death in Clark County. The patient was a 70-year-old woman and a New York resident. Her illness was identified shortly after her arrival in Las Vegas and she was hospitalized shortly after. Because this patient is a resident of another state, she is not included in the confirmed novel H1N1 case count for Nevada, but would be included the case count for New York State.

The Southern Nevada Health District performs influenza surveillance year round. Currently, the traditional influenza season has ended and results received by the health district from rapid influenza testing will no longer be classified as cases because the accuracy of rapid testing decreases when flu is not as widespread in the community. This change in reporting will likely lead to a decrease in the total number of positive influenza test results.

Cases of novel H1N1 are confirmed using a more reliable testing method and these numbers are likely to remain at a consistent level, but might represent more of the total positive cases reported due to the change in reporting of seasonal flu cases.

The health district has adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-recommended testing protocols to test only hospitalized or seriously ill patients to track the virus' severity in the community. As a result, the health district is no longer investigating all positive novel H1N1 test results and cases, therefore specific information regarding cases, such as age or sex will not be available. As part of its surveillance, the health district will only investigate novel H1N1 cases if the patient is hospitalized or severely ill.

Initial testing recommendations were made to identify if novel H1N1 influenza virus was present in the community. Some health care providers are continuing to test mildly ill patients for the flu and the health district is receiving results from several local labs as well as the state public health laboratory in Reno.

The health district is stressing that a recommendation to close public venues or schools is not warranted at this time. Individuals who are ill should avoid traveling or attending public events to minimize the spread of influenza or any other infectious illness.

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Current recommendations to the public encourage good health habits to minimize the spread of influenza:

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

Individuals who become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea may want to contact their health care provider.

Updated information is available on the Southern Nevada Health District website, www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention site, www.cdc.gov. In addition, the Nevada Helpline is available in English and Spanish, (1-866) 767-5038 or (702) 759-INFO (4636).