



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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State Health Commissioner

Department of Health
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April 28, 2009

Dear Colleague,

On April 27th, I declared a **public health emergency** in Virginia in response to the intensifying outbreak of swine influenza. I took this action to further enhance the Health Department's ability to communicate the latest information and guidance to you as this rapidly changing situation evolves.

The World Health Organization has raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 4. A Phase 4 alert is characterized by confirmed person-to-person spread of a new influenza virus able to cause "community-level" outbreaks." The increase in the pandemic alert phase indicates that the likelihood of a pandemic has grown.

The Virginia Department of Health is encouraging the use of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website as a tool for all clinicians, EMS personnel and first responders to obtain the most up-to-date information and guidance for treating your patients. At this time, guidelines are evolving as this outbreak becomes better delineated. This site (www.cdc.gov/swineflu) includes a Spanish-language version which can help you reach your Hispanic patients.

Your assistance in identifying, reporting and testing possible cases of swine influenza is paramount to protecting the health of Virginians and I request that you take the following actions:

- Follow CDC guidelines in the use of antivirals for swine influenza A (H1N1) and seasonal influenza. Overuse of these can lead to resistance. Consult the CDC guidelines for details on which individuals should receive prophylaxis. <http://cdc.gov/swineflu/recommendations.htm>
- Consult with your local health department to submit tests for swine influenza on the following groups:
 - Patients with influenza-like illness (ILI) with a history of travel to an area with confirmed swine flu. As of April 28, this includes TX, CA, KS, OH, New York City, Mexico, Canada, Spain and Scotland. Please check the CDC website for daily updates.
 - Patients admitted to the hospital with febrile respiratory illness. (Note: those physicians participating in the CDC and VDH flu surveillance program should continue to do so).
- Patient Isolation – patients with ILI should stay at home until symptoms resolve. Patients awaiting test results from the state laboratory should stay home until lab results are available.

Below are the CDC's interim guidance on case definitions for Infection with Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Virus. This is subject to change on a daily basis. Please check the CDC website for updates.

A **confirmed case** of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection is defined as a person with an acute febrile respiratory illness with laboratory confirmed swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection at CDC by one or more of the following tests:

1. real-time RT-PCR
2. viral culture

A **probable case** of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection is defined as a person with an acute febrile respiratory illness who is:

- positive for influenza A, but negative for H1 and H3 by influenza RT-PCR, or
- positive for influenza A by an influenza rapid test or an influenza immunofluorescence assay (IFA) plus meets criteria for a suspected case

A **suspected case** of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection is defined as a person with acute febrile respiratory illness with onset

- within 7 days of close contact with a person who is a confirmed case of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection, or
- within 7 days of travel to community either within the United States or internationally where there are one or more confirmed swine influenza A(H1N1) cases, or
- resides in a community where there are one or more confirmed swine influenza cases.

The Virginia Department of Health will continue to do our best to provide you with information pertinent to your practice. Please contact your local health department (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/lhd/>) or the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services, (804) 648-4480 x 402, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP
State Health Commissioner