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## **P R E S S R E L E A S E**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Wednesday, April 29 p.m. Swine Flu Update**

**\*\* Note: Public Health Department will be releasing updates daily between 12 noon and 1:00 p.m. starting today.**

### **Testing for Swine Flu and Antiviral Medications**

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (PHD) has been communicating with local physicians on procedures for testing for suspect cases of swine flu. A provider health alert was issued today and has been posted on the PHD website.

Because antiviral medications are in limited commercial supply locally, the PHD has advised physicians not to prescribe antiviral medication unless the patient has been determined to be a Probable swine flu case.

Santa Barbara County has requested a supply of antiviral medications from the State emergency pharmaceutical stockpile. The Public Health Department is currently developing priorities for utilizing these medications for treatment of any local swine flu cases that may be identified.

The Public Health Laboratory in Santa Barbara is processing tests submitted from local providers. Priority is given to tests for patients who meet the case definition for a suspect swine flu case from the Centers for Disease Control below:

A **Suspected Case** of swine influenza virus is defined as a person with sudden onset respiratory illness (cough, sore throat, chills, body aches, runny nose and a temperature above 100° F (37.7° C) with symptoms that began:

- within 7 days of close contact with a person who is a Confirmed case of swine flu, or
- within 7 days of travel to community either within the United States or internationally where there are one or more Confirmed swine flu cases, or
- resides in a community where there are one or more Confirmed swine flu cases.

### **Questions**

The Public Health Department is receiving calls from the public with questions about swine flu. Here is information that addresses some common questions.

#### **What is the incubation period for swine flu?**

The incubation period for swine flu is 2-7 days. This means that someone exposed to swine flu will develop symptoms within 2-7 days. A person that has swine flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. Children, especially younger children, are potentially contagious for longer periods.

#### **How is swine flu spread?**

Swine flu is spread through germs from respiratory droplets and by touching surfaces that are contaminated with these germs. Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze

of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

### **How long can viruses live outside the body?**

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

### **For Additional Information**

For more information on swine flu and flu prevention tips, go to Public Health Department website at [www.sbcphd.org](http://www.sbcphd.org), the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) , or the California Department of Public Health website at [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov).

### **Swine Flu Cases**

At this time there are currently no cases of swine flu in Santa Barbara County.

According to the Centers for Disease Control there are currently 91 cases across the US in 10 states. The first death from swine flu in the United States was reported today in Texas. The 23- month old boy who died was reported to live in Mexico and to have come to Texas for treatment.

### **New Swine Flu Hot Line**

A new Swine Flu Hotline was established by the California Department of Public Health and is operational as of 8:00 a.m. today. Spanish translation of the hotline will be available Thursday at 8:00 a.m. The hotline number is 1-888-865-0564 and it will operate from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. The hotline has answers to frequently asked questions which are revised daily.

Locally, the County Public Health Department has established a Swine Flu Phone Line which continues to provide information on the status of the swine flu outbreak. The public can call 1-888-722-6358 for updated recorded information in both English and Spanish, 24 hours/day.

### **Swine Flu Prevention**

Steps to stop the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses:

- Stay home when ill to avoid spreading illness to others
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues
- Wash your hands thoroughly or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid contact with others that are ill

A vaccine for swine flu is not available at this time. The vaccine for regular seasonal flu does not provide protection against swine flu but it does provide protection for the seasonal flu. This is because seasonal flu is caused by a different virus than the virus that causes swine flu.

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