



H1N1 FLU PRESENT IN NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT

MontgomeryCountyVA.gov

July 7, 2009

Montgomery County, Virginia – New River Health Director Dr. Jody Hershey said today that local residents need to continue to protect themselves against the H1N1 flu virus, with new cases being confirmed each week in the state. The Virginia Department of Health is closely monitoring the outbreak to keep Virginians informed of this rapidly evolving public health issue.

State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA recently returned from a meeting with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta on H1N1 and is attending a H1N1 summit this week in Maryland with the federal Departments of Health and Human Resources and Homeland Security. “We will continue to work very closely in our planning with federal, state and local partners to ensure that we are well prepared to help protect Virginians this summer and for the upcoming flu season in the fall,” Commissioner Remley said this week.

The New River Health District - which includes the City of Radford, and Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties - has confirmed cases locally. This is not unexpected since it is mid-winter and the height of the flu season in the southern hemisphere. Due to the virus’s relative ease of transmission and the pervasiveness of international travel, it is likely we will continue to see new cases in Virginia throughout our summer months.

Initially, flu testing was done to determine the presence of the virus and to determine how it behaves. Virginia has now confirmed that the virus is present in communities across the Commonwealth, and other than in a few unfortunate exceptions, that most cases of the illness are not severe or life-threatening. Thus, it is no longer necessary to do large-scale testing of all patients to identify the presence of the virus in a particular city or county.

However, to address the interest in information about positive test results - and consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s web site - VDH provides information on positive test results listed by Health District, on its web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov. The site is updated each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Flu testing is now focused on protecting those people who are at greater risk for complications from the new virus. These include people hospitalized with flu-like illnesses, pregnant women, the elderly, the very young, and people with underlying chronic health conditions.

Treatment and preventive measures are similar to those for seasonal flu.

Everyone should protect themselves and others by:

- covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, and throwing the tissue in the trash after use;
- washing their hands often with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand cleaners, especially after they cough or sneeze;
- limiting close contact with sick people; and
- preventing the spread of germs by not touching eyes, nose, or mouth.

VDH encourages residents of the Commonwealth to remain vigilant against the spread of all influenza. Like all viruses, it is likely that will continue to change. It is important to recognize this potential for change, and the possibility that it may cause more severe illness.

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Symptoms of flu typically include fever, cough, and sore throat, and may also include headache, chills, fatigue and body aches. Persons with influenza are contagious for up to seven days after the onset of illness and possibly longer if they are still symptomatic.

Anyone with flu-like symptoms should protect themselves and others by:

- staying home from work or school, and limiting their contact with others to keep from infecting them; and
- calling their health care providers or their health department before seeking care, so that the necessary infection control measures can be put in place.

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