

New Hampshire Modifies Testing for H1N1 (Swine) Flu

Division of Public Health

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Contact Information: Public Information Office
603-271-4051

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) announced today that it will modify the criteria for doing confirmatory testing for the H1N1 virus. DPHS will test only those individuals who are hospitalized with respiratory illness, health care workers with flu-like symptoms who provide direct care and in some situations of public health interest, such as outbreaks at schools or congregate settings.

“There is abundant evidence that H1N1 influenza exists in communities throughout New Hampshire and the country,” said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health. “Since H1N1 has become well established in our State, further community based individual case confirmation doesn’t help determine recommendations for treatment, prevention or disease control measures. Just today the World Health Organization (WHO) declared H1N1 an official pandemic, which is an indicator of how widespread the transmission of this virus is, not its severity. This should serve as a reminder to everyone that they should not be complacent and should be taking steps to be prepared in case the virus changes and becomes more severe.”

The focus at this point should continue to be on prevention and the appropriate steps to limit transmission of this and other influenza-like illnesses. The recommendations for residents of New Hampshire include: staying home if you are sick; calling your doctor if you have a fever of 100.4°F or greater, and a cough or sore throat; washing hands frequently; and covering your cough or sneeze with your sleeve. Specifically, people with the symptoms listed above should stay home from work and/or school until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours. It’s important for people at higher risk for complications from influenza to contact their doctor if they have these symptoms, including children younger than 5, people 65 or older, pregnant women, and those with chronic illnesses such as asthma.

“Even though there has been a change in our approach to testing, there is still on-going monitoring and investigation regarding H1N1,” said Montero. “There is a lot of planning to be done to get ready for this fall,” said Montero.

For information about H1N1 flu, visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu.