



## *County of Columbia - Emergency Medical Services*

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### **ADVISORY**

## **Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Infection**

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**NEW YORK STATE ACTIVATES HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN;  
PUTS STATE ON 'HIGH ALERT' FOR SWINE FLU.**

Governor Patterson has activated New York State's Health Emergency Preparedness Plan, to begin dealing with the recent outbreak of Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Infection ("Swine Flu"). To date, a total of 8 cases have been confirmed in the State – all in New York City. It is important that we, the EMS community, take immediate steps to help protect ourselves and others from this influenza outbreak.

#### **What you should know about Swine Flu:**

Swine flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. While people do not normally get swine flu, the CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

#### **Steps emergency responders should take to limit exposure<sup>1</sup>:**

- Initial interrogation of the patient from at least 2 meters (6.5 feet) away to determine if personal protective equipment precautions are necessary.
- Recommended PPE for taking care of ill/potentially infected patients includes: disposable gowns, gloves, goggles/face shields and N95 or better respirators. PPE should be donned and doffed according to published guidelines to prevent cross contamination, including eye and gown protection when splash or airborne contamination is possible.
- Placing a mask on all patients with suspected symptoms, using filtered oxygen masks when available, or non-rebreather masks when oxygen is required. Droplet producing procedures should be avoided whenever possible including nebulizers, bag-valve-mask, suctioning or intubation. If bag-valve-masks are needed, use those with HEPA filters whenever possible.
- Alert receiving hospital personnel of the possibility of an infectious patient as soon as possible and hold suspected infectious patients in the ambulance until their destination in the hospital is known, rather than immediately moving them into the emergency room.
- Perform a thorough cleaning of the stretcher and all equipment that has come in contact with or been within 2 meters (6.5 feet) with an approved disinfectant, upon completion of the call.



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### **Columbia County 911 Severe Respiratory Infection Screening:**

Using the Medical Priority Dispatch System (ProQA software) Columbia County 911 will use the Severe Respiratory Infection (SRI) Surveillance Tool to interrogate callers reporting a patient with flu-like symptoms. The SRI Surveillance Tool will be used in conjunction with MPDS Protocols 6 (Breathing Problems), 10 (Chest Pain), 18 (Headache) and 26 (Sick Person).

At a minimum, the following information should be obtained:

- Have they recently been in Mexico or been exposed to anyone that has been in Mexico?
- Are they febrile or have a fever, and if so, is it higher than 101°F (38° C)?
- Do they have a cough or any other respiratory symptoms like difficulty breathing?

If positive responses are received to any of the SRI Surveillance questions, dispatch should notify responders "*respiratory precautions are advised*".

### **Additional sources of information:**

Columbia County EMS Coordinator's Office:

<http://www.ccemscoordinator.com>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>

New York State Department of Health:

[http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/swine\\_flu/index.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/swine_flu/index.htm)

PandemicFlu.Gov

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

### **Conclusion:**

We remain in contact with the State and local authorities regarding this situation. Information is being sent directly to agency administrators as we learn it. We ask that agency administrators distribute this information to personnel in a timely manner. This information is posted on the County EMS Website as well.

Additional updates will be provided as the situation warrants.

<sup>1</sup> – Source: National EMS Management Association