

**Bureau of Emergency Medical Services  
New York State Department of Health**

**Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Advisory**

**To:** All EMS Agencies

**From:** Disaster Preparedness Unit

**Date:** April 28, 2009

**Introduction**

The Bureau of Emergency Medical Services is providing the following update regarding the swine influenza A (H1N1) Infection occurring in New York State. The CDC is investigating multiple human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection that have been identified in California, Texas, Kansas, Ohio, and New York State with confirmed cases in New York City. In addition, swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses has been confirmed by CDC from patients in Mexico, Canada, Spain and New Zealand. Investigations are ongoing to determine the source and extent of the infection

Additional specific information is available from:

NYS Department of Health at:

[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)

CDC at: [www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance/](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance/)

NYC DOH/MH at: [www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/home/home.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/home/home.shtml)

**Background**

- Swine influenza A (H1N1) has been diagnosed in patients in the United States and internationally. The largest concentration of patients has been from Mexico.
- CDC and NYCDOH/MH have confirmed cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) in the New York City area.
- NYSDOH requests that providers report any outbreaks of influenza-like illness to their Local Health Department (LHD) immediately.
- Additional information on the outbreak, as well as further clinical guidance, will be provided as it becomes available. EMS providers should monitor the CDC and State WEB sites listed above.

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- As of April 27, 2009, none of the confirmed U.S. Swine Flu Influenza patients have been seriously ill. All patients have recovered or are recovering after a mild illness.

### **What EMS agencies should do:**

EMS personnel responding to calls should, at a minimum be aware of the following:

### **What am I looking for?**

Patients with Influenza-like (flu) symptoms, including fever, cough, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea,

Cases of Swine Flu are classified as Confirmed, Probable or Suspected. In most situations, EMS responding to a 9-1-1 calls will be responding to suspected cases. The definition for a suspected case of Swine Flu is:

1. A person with an acute respiratory illness who was a close contact to a confirmed case of swine influenza A(HIN1) virus infection while the patient was ill **OR**
2. A person with an acute respiratory illness with a recent history of contact with an animal with confirmed or suspected swine influenza A (HIN1) virus infection **OR**
3. A person with an acute respiratory illness who has traveled to an area where there are confirmed or probable cases of swine influenza A(HIN1) **\*\*Including travel to New York City.**

The following is additional advice from the CDC regarding patients with influenza and influenza-like symptoms.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

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### **How can I prevent cross contamination?**

If you are treating a patient who complains or exhibits influenza-like symptoms (as listed above), you should:

- Continue to use Universal precautions, (*Standard, Droplet and Contact*) for all patient care activities.
- Additionally EMS personnel should wear **N95 respirators** (or if unavailable, surgical masks which are secured by tying) when treating a patient, and should don gloves and goggles/faceshield if providing direct patient care.
  - For suctioning, nebulizing treatment or intubation, EMS personnel should wear N95 respirators, gowns, gloves, and goggles/faceshield for the procedure.
  - When care is completed, place all personal protective equipment (PPE) in a biohazard bag for appropriate disposal or cleaning.
  - Offer surgical masks to all patients with symptoms of a respiratory illness if the patient can tolerate wearing them. Otherwise provide patients with tissues.
  - Maintain strict adherence to hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer immediately after removing gloves and other protective equipment, as well as following any contact with respiratory secretions.

Remember to avoid potentially contaminating other areas of the ambulance vehicle or equipment, by removing potentially contaminated PPE when not caring for the patient or cleaning the ambulance.

### **Cleaning and housekeeping on my ambulance and equipment**

Routine cleaning and disinfection methods used during influenza seasons should be used in the management of swine influenza. Any surfaces and equipment that was used during a response should be thoroughly cleaned following those procedures. More information can be found at:

[http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/cleaning\\_ems.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/cleaning_ems.html)

### **Reporting to the hospital**

Make every reasonable effort to advise the hospital you are transporting to, that you are transporting a patient with an influenza-like illness, so they can take any appropriate precautions.

### **Protecting yourself and your family**

#### **What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are

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everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If one is not immediately available, cough or sneeze into your arm or shoulder (not hands). Throw any tissues into the trash after use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with flu-like symptoms, follow your EMS agency's exposure control plan.

### **What should I do if I get sick?**

At this time, all U.S. cases of Swine Influenza have been mild. If you live in areas (as identified by your Local Health Department or State Health department) where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, cough, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should contact your health care provider, particularly if you are concerned about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is indicated.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

### **Recommendations for Dispatch and 911 centers:**

For patient calls for respiratory infections (flu-like symptoms) the following additional information should be obtained if possible:

- Has the person recently been in Mexico or been exposed to anyone that has been in Mexico. If the person traveled to Mexico, how long was the stay? (pay particular attention to those stays of 7 days or longer)
- Does the person currently report having a fever? If known, what was the temperature recorded?

The caller's responses to the above questions should be relayed to the EMS responders prior to their arrival on scene. It is recommended that EMS providers wear an N95 mask (or in the absence of one, a properly secured (tied) surgical mask) and gloves before entering the scene of this type of call.

### **Summary**

This is an evolving situation. Information and recommendations are rapidly being updated. Please remain vigilant in your response to influenza -like symptoms by

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keeping yourself informed and referring to the above indicated websites for the latest information and recommendations.

Information for the public can be accessed at the Swine Flu Hot Line:  
1-800-808-1987

Approved by: Edward Wronski, Director

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