

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVE LEVY
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

HUMAYUN J. CHAUDHRY, D.O., M.S.
Commissioner

April 27, 2009

Re: Swine Flu in the United States

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As you may be aware, the United States Department of Health and Human Services yesterday declared a national Public Health Emergency in light of the identification and confirmation of 20 cases of swine flu in California, Texas, Kansas, Ohio and New York. The declaration is a precautionary measure to ensure that local and state health departments have the resources they need to respond quickly and effectively should the need arise. As President Obama said this morning, the threat of spreading swine flu infections is a cause for concern but "not a cause for alarm."

There are no cases of swine flu identified or confirmed at this time in Suffolk County. Eight individuals from Suffolk County were tested for swine flu as a precaution on Saturday and the New York State Department of Health informed us Sunday that all of those test results were negative for swine flu.

Should the situation change, you will be sent additional notification and information. The Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS), working with County Executive Steve Levy and his office, has been in touch with hospitals, emergency departments, emergency medical service workers, and physicians around the County and has been actively involved in enhanced surveillance of what is happening. We have been in close communication with the New York State Department of Health and federal authorities and are monitoring the situation very closely.

A high index of suspicion is of great value in protecting Suffolk County residents, especially our students. You should consult your physician if your child is ill. The doctor, in consultation with Suffolk County Department of Health Services, may decide to do testing for flu, and may request special testing for swine flu if that is needed. Please note that every case of a flu-like illness does not require testing for swine flu. The New York State Department of Health has provided specific information to health care providers throughout the state about who should be tested for swine flu and we are reaching out to physicians to communicate and reinforce that information, as well.



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There are several everyday actions that everyone can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Your child should be encouraged to take these important public health steps also, at home and in school:

1. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

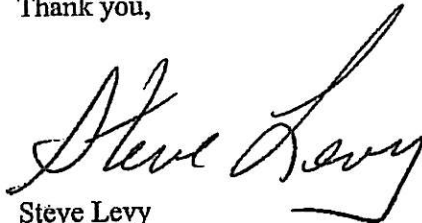
2. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

3. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

4. If you get sick with influenza, or have flu-like symptoms (fever, body aches, sore throat, runny nose, cough, headache, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea), you should consult your physician. In such a case, you should tell your physician or school nurse if you have recently traveled, especially to those areas where swine flu has already been found – New York City, San Diego County or Imperial County in California; Guadalupe County in Texas; or Dickinson County in Kansas. The physician or school nurse will then determine, in consultation with our department's Division of Public Health (631-853-3055), whether influenza testing, swine flu testing, and/or treatment is warranted. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from school if you develop flu-like symptoms and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth as germs can easily spread this way.

The New York State Department of Health has set up a special hotline to answer questions from residents of New York State about swine flu and influenza and anyone may call their number, 24 hours a day, seven days a week: 1-800-808-1987. The Suffolk County Department of Health Services' Division of Public Health is also available for any additional questions, or issues specific to Suffolk County, at 631-853-3055, weekdays from 9 to 5.

Thank you,



Steve Levy
Suffolk County Executive



Humayun J. Chaudhry, D.O.
Commissioner, Department of Health Services