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HEALTH UPDATE

Second Laboratory Confirmed Test Result of H1N1 (Swine Flu) in Plumas County August 20, 2009

Contact: Mimi Hall, Public Health Director (530-283-6330)

Plumas County Public Health Agency received a second positive test result for the H1N1 (Swine Flu) novel influenza virus on August 18. This is the second laboratory confirmed case of H1N1 in Plumas County, following one on July 1. Plumas County's health officer, Dr. Valeska Armisen, says flu cases this time of the year are rare, so most people who have the flu now would more than likely have H1N1 flu. Dr. Armisen urges all Plumas County residents to take care and help to prevent spread of flu.

A number of H1N1 cases have been reported in regional and neighboring California counties, including 39 reported cases in just one week from August 5 through 12 in Washoe County, Nevada. Reporting of H1N1 to the state of is now based on laboratory testing of hospitalized cases or deaths, so this recent positive test result will not be included in California's H1N1 reporting system, as the patient was not hospitalized. Because we already know H1N1 is in the area, only a small number of people with severe illness or who require hospitalization will be tested.

Unlike seasonal flu, which tends to affect older adults, H1N1 rates are highest in children and young adults. The group most affected by H1N1 infection in the U.S. is young people ages 5-24 years old, followed by very young children birth to 4 years old. Pregnant women and people who are overweight are at increased risk of serious illness from H1N1 as well as anyone with an underlying health condition such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease.

The symptoms of the seasonal and H1N1 flu include fever and cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, and fatigue. Most people with the flu can stay at home and do not require professional care. But if you are very ill or have other health problems, start early with a call to your physician for advice on home care or for an appointment if necessary.

Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster, but you should check with your health care provider on whether or not they are right for you. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is still defining who should receive these medicines but it is likely that those at higher risk of flu complications or with severe flu illness that requires hospitalization will be given the highest priority.

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination (flu shot) each year. You should also:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Try to avoid sick people

If you become ill with flu-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea:

- Stay away from others.
- Always cover your cough.
- Wash your hands often and do not shake hands with others while you are ill.
- Stay home until you are free of a fever (temperature LESS THAN 100 degrees Fahrenheit) without any fever reducing medicines (Tylenol, Advil, etc.) for at least 24 hours.

Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider early. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster, but you should check with your health care provider on whether or not they are right for you.

Plumas County Public health Agency is working with the California Department of Public Health and the CDC to plan for flu shot clinics with local partners this fall. These clinics will include both seasonal flu and the H1N1 vaccine. Public Health Director Mimi Hall stated, “We expect to begin receiving seasonal flu vaccine by the beginning of September, and the H1N1 flu vaccine as early as mid-October. As soon as we receive both seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccine and the guidance on how we can provide them, we will inform the public and our partners how, when and where they can be obtained.”

On July 29, 2009, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)—an advisory committee to CDC—recommended that novel H1N1 flu vaccine be made available first to the following five groups:

- Pregnant women
- Health care workers and emergency medical responders
- People caring for infants under 6 months of age
- Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years
- People aged 25 to 64 years with underlying medical conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes)

Local health officials continue to stay informed on H1N1 at the regional and state level to be aware of any emerging trends, prepare for new developments and adjust the local response as necessary.

In addition, officials from the CDC have developed guidance for preventing and managing the novel H1N1 influenza in the workplace, when traveling, for schools and child care providers, and when pregnant.

More information is available at the California Department of Public Health website, www.cdph.ca.gov, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu, or www.countyofplumas.com. CDPH also has a telephone hotline: 1-888-865-0564. You may also call Plumas County Public Health Agency at 283-6330 or 888-801-6330 and ask to speak with the Nurse of the Day.