



Plumas County Public Health Agency

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Health Advisory

NOVEL H1N1 INFLUENZA GOES TO CAMP

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With summer well underway and summer camps in full swing, the novel H1N1 virus has begun showing up in camp settings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued interim guidance to help day and residential camp administrators prevent and respond to novel flu outbreaks. The advisory comes on the heels of the first probable outbreak of H1N1 at a camp in Plumas County.

This week, a report was received of sixteen probable H1N1 influenza cases at a camp in Plumas County. Campers and staff have fallen ill with symptoms of influenza. Of those who became ill, two were chosen to be tested for influenza, and early results tested positive for Influenza A. Lab data show that approximately 99% of Influenza A positive tests are the H1N1 strain. Camp directors have been very proactive in coordinating with Plumas County public health officials for assistance and information and have instituted CDC's guidance in response to a potential H1N1 outbreak in a camp setting. Sick campers and staff have been quarantined, and camp administrators are screening others for symptoms. Since widespread H1N1 activity is continuing in California, we can expect more such outbreaks this summer.

The guidance from CDC includes basic measures such as educating campers and staff on staying home when sick, covering coughs, and washing hands frequently. It also includes several specific suggestions for residential campers. For both day and residential camps, the CDC suggests developing a relationship with local health departments to assist with response planning and to become familiar with illness reporting requirements.

Camps and parents should communicate early on how illnesses will be handled and arrange ways for sick campers and staff members to be transported home from camp. Camps should also develop protocols ahead of time for evaluation of sick campers, and a healthcare provider should be contacted for severely ill patients or sick campers who have underlying medical conditions. They should make hand sanitizers readily available, especially for use during activities, such as hikes, in which campers don't have access to sinks and liquid soap.

Since close quarters and other conditions at camp are ripe for spreading many kinds of illnesses, staffers should consider screening incoming campers to determine possible novel flu exposure and to determine if any young people or staff has preexisting medical conditions, such as asthma that might increase their risk for flu complications.

To further reduce the risk of bringing the novel H1N1 virus to camp, the campers, staff members, and volunteers should be notified ahead of time that they cannot attend if they have had an influenza-like illness within 7 days before camp begins or until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours. Those who have been exposed to a person who was sick with the novel virus or had a flu-like infection should be instructed to monitor and report any symptoms.

Staff and volunteers should be taught how to recognize flu-like illnesses and quickly isolate campers who appear to be sick. For example, if separate rooms aren't available for sick campers, staff can use a part of a room with temporary barriers, a separate tent, or a separate cabin. Designated staff members (ones who don't have risk factors such as pregnancy) should care for the sick campers to avoid spreading the virus to others. Linens, eating utensils, and dishes used by sick campers don't need to be cleaned differently or separately, but those who handle soiled laundry should wash their hands immediately after touching it, the CDC guidance says.

Now is a good time to familiarize yourself with the CDC recommendations for camps, which can be accessed at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/camp.htm>

For questions or more information, please contact the Plumas County Public Health Agency at 530-283-6330 or 1-800-801-6330.