

RUTHERFORD POLK MCDOWELL HEALTH DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

September 11, 2009

H1N1 flu has been reported in 81 counties in North Carolina.

H1N1 is the predominant strain of flu and is considered to be widespread.

CDC reports that nationwide there have been 9079 hospitalizations and 593 deaths.

The state reports that there have been 193 hospitalizations and 9 deaths in NC.

For comparison, a 2009 CDC report estimates that 36,000 people die from the seasonal flu alone every year.

How do you know if you have H1N1 flu (formerly swine flu)? The only way to know is to have a laboratory test for confirmation. The current guidelines only allow testing for hospitalized individuals. The rapid flu test that is used in your Doctors office cannot tell you that you have H1N1 . Rapid flu testing may not be as accurate as is could be and is only an indicator that you may have some form of flu.

H1N1 was heavily tested for in the beginning because it was new. It is now being tracked like the seasonal flu.

The prevention and treatment measures for H1N1 are the same or similar for the seasonal flu.

If you feel ill, it is recommended that you visit your personal physician first instead of going to the emergency room.

The best way to combat the flu is to prevent it in the first place. There are small things you can do now to help yourself and others.

1.Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2.Stay home when you are sick.

If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

3.Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, change the clothing as soon as possible.

4.Clean your hands.

Washing your hands, using soap and water, often will help protect you from germs. Alcohol based hand sanitizers are also an effective alternative when hand washing is not available. (use one with a 60% concentration of alcohol)

5.Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6.Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

There will be both a seasonal flu and a H1N1 flu vaccine available.

The local health department has not been notified as to when or how much it will receive.

It is recommended that everyone receive the seasonal vaccine when it is available.

There are priority groups that will be eligible to receive the H1N1 vaccine first. Those groups, in no particular order, are:

Pregnant Women

Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel

People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months

People between 6 months and 24 years old

Adults ages 25 to 64 with chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

The Rutherford Polk McDowell Health District (RPMHD) is in very regular communications with NC Public Health and the CDC to stay current on this rapidly evolving issue.

RPMHD is also in regular communication with local agencies and organizations that may be involved in the preparedness and response phases should there be widespread problems locally.

Please call your local health department office with any questions or for information.

For more information, and guidance for specific groups, please visit the following websites:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1

www.flu.nc.gov

www.rpmhd.org

www.flu.gov

Local Contacts:

Phillip Melton, Interim Health Director (828) 287-6101

Helen White, District Clinical Supervisor (828) 287-6044

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RPM Epidemiology Preparedness Infection Control Safety Team Contact E-mail: rpmepi@rpmhd.org

Attachments:

H1N1 flu and you flyer

Influenza Surveillance Report #43