

# Richland County

## Health and Human Services

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*Randy Jacquet, Director*

Date: April 30, 2009

To: Richland County Media

From: Marianne Stanek  
Richland County HHS Public Health

Re: Swine Influenza

Richland County Health & Human Services Public Health is recommending that people take precautions to avoid illness due to swine influenza. The recommendation comes after Governor Doyle declared a public health emergency in the State of Wisconsin. Among other things, the declaration of the public health emergency allows the Department of Health Services to take all necessary and appropriate steps to prevent and respond to incidences of swine influenza A and make anti-viral medication available to any person needing it in the State, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

Swine influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. At the current time, there are 5 probable cases of swine influenza A in Wisconsin.

Symptoms of swine influenza in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

The World Health Organization raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 5 on April 29, 2009. A Phase 5 alert is a “strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.” In other words, a

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pandemic is expected and residents and businesses should be prepared to deal with the effects of widespread illness and absenteeism.

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are 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. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Use your sleeve or elbow if you don't have a tissue.
- 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 get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Local public health is in contact with the State of Wisconsin Division of Public Health and local medical providers, and will provide additional information as it becomes available. Additional information and posters on hand washing and "Cover your Cough" are available from public health at the Richland County Community Services Building. The CDC's website and the Wisconsin Division of Public Health's Pandemic Flu website also provide excellent resources.

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

DPH: <http://www.pandemic.wisconsin.gov>