

July 31, 2009

## H1N1 (Swine) Flu Update

The current number of laboratory confirmed cases is 25,\* including 2 deaths. Starting next week, we will be following the Florida Department of Health's guidance for reporting trends as opposed to the numbers of confirmed cases in the county. This is because these numbers do not represent what is really happening in the community. Through our established disease monitoring systems, local health officials know that flu activity in Sarasota County has been increasing over the past three weeks, and is approaching the level seen in Feb/March, the peak of the regular flu season.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of influenza usually include fever with a cough or sore throat. Influenza infection can also lead to additional symptoms like headache, tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, diarrhea, and vomiting.

### What to do if you develop symptoms

If you think you have influenza, call your health care provider and discuss whether you need to be seen in their office or emergency department or stay home. Those with influenza symptoms should stay home to avoid spreading infections, including influenza. Postpone travel plans if you or family members become ill. Health officials advise that you stay home for a week after symptoms begin or 24 hours after you are symptom-free whichever is longer.

### Precautions

- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand cleaners to reduce the spread of respiratory illness.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it, and then wash hands.

People who are ill should keep away from other household members as much as possible. This helps to reduce the risk of infecting others and spreading the virus. Those who are sick and sharing a common space with other household members in your home, are advised to wear a facemask, if one is available and tolerable, to help prevent spreading the virus to others.

### Stay Informed

Visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org). Information from this web site is also available on touch-screen health kiosks at all Sarasota County libraries and Senior Friendship Centers throughout Sarasota County.

Call the Sarasota County Health Department's Flu Information Line, 941-861-2800.

\* This number includes lab sample confirmations from physicians working with private labs. The majority of these are isolated cases that do not pose a public health risk. Therefore, they are not being followed by the health department.