



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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First Death from H1N1 Flu in Stanislaus County

Stanislaus County – A 21-year-old Stanislaus County woman with pre-existing medical conditions, died on July 1 while hospitalized with severe pneumonia. “Tests later revealed that this was a complication of infection with the H1N1 virus,” said Stanislaus County Public Health Officer John Walker, M.D. She is the first person in Stanislaus County to die from the H1N1 virus. “We would like to convey our deepest sympathy to the family of this patient,” Dr. Walker said. “We have had numerous tests for H1N1 within our county during the past two months. Only four have tested positive, and all four have been within the past three weeks. Clearly, virus activity is on the increase within our community. However, this should not be cause for alarm.”

Last week the California Department of Public Health upgraded the state's H1N1 influenza activity to WIDESPREAD. Virus isolates at the state Public Health Laboratory are at levels normally seen during the winter months. As of July 2, the State reported more than 2,000 cases, with 233 hospitalized and 23 deaths. The vast majority of cases have mild or moderate illness, and most patients fully recover. “However,” Dr. Walker adds, “the tragic California H1N1 deaths this spring and summer reveal that we are still in the early stages of a global influenza pandemic and need to continue precautions to protect ourselves, our families, our co-workers, and our community.”

There is currently no vaccine available to protect against the novel H1N1 virus. Vaccine is in production and should be available by late fall-early winter. It is important that county residents take the following precautions to help prevent the spread of the virus.

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbows, sleeves, or with a tissue. Dispose of the tissue after each use. Coughing into hands can spread germs to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, even after washing your hands.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home if you are sick.

The symptoms of H1N1 Influenza in humans are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 influenza.

For more information about the H1N1 virus, please visit the County web site at www.stanemergency.com.

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