

May 7, 2009

To date, West Virginia has no confirmed cases of H1N1 (swine flu)

The H1N1 (swine flu) virus continues to spread from person-to-person in the United States without regard for borders, race or ethnicity. **In West Virginia, confirmed cases still remains at zero.** The list of states with the numbers of people who have confirmed cases is updated daily on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>. The state department of health and human resources also updates its website each day by 3:00 p.m. with current and state specific information at www.wvdhhr.org.

It's important to remember that influenza is always serious. Each year in the United States, seasonal flu claims about 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations. The current outbreak of H1N1 (swine flu) has the potential to be at least as serious as seasonal flu. The fact remains that there currently is no vaccine against this new virus.

The CDC reports that it's too soon to predict what will happen or how the virus might change. It is important that we stay informed. West Virginia is surrounded by states with confirmed cases of the virus. It seems inevitable that our state will have confirmed cases too.

There are many things you can do to help protect your health and reduce the spread of this new virus:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your arm when you cough or sneeze. Discard the used *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.
- Stay home if you are sick. Always follow your doctor's advice if you get the flu.
- Follow the guidance and recommendations from your local health department regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social gatherings. The advice of your local health officials may be different from other areas as it will be based on the specific circumstances in each affected community.