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**Livingston County  
Health Center**

## **Local Leaders Meet to Address H1N1**

### **Livingston County Health Center Hosts Special Meeting to Address Potential H1N1 Influenza Pandemic**

**August 26, 2009:** Livingston County Health Center hosted a special meeting yesterday to update area leaders on the current H1N1 pandemic influenza situation, and discuss cooperation in taking measures to protect county residents through mass vaccination and public health education.

The meeting was well attended, with over 40 representatives from area schools, pharmacies, correctional center, doctor's offices, law enforcement, fire department, emergency services, healthcare agencies, local government and the public health center.

The Health Center provided the group with an update on the current status of the H1N1 (swine) flu situation locally, and what they can do to protect their individual populations and the county at large. Social distancing was discussed at length during the update, including the possibility of limiting large social gatherings such as church services, athletic events and community celebrations if the need should arise.

As of August 15<sup>th</sup>, there have been 183 cases of H1N1 flu in Missouri. In Livingston County, there has been one probable case and there are additional isolated cases in some neighboring counties. The health center is monitoring reported H1N1 cases in the county through its regular disease surveillance practices, in place all year round. One of the main indicators that the spread of H1N1 viruses could be a major concern is the increased number of influenza cases during this time of year, which is not the typical peak flu season. Flu-like illnesses have continued to be reported in the county all summer by local surveillance sites including the hospital, local doctor's offices, nursing homes and schools.

The symptoms of H1N1 in people are similar to the symptoms of the regular seasonal flu that arrives in the fall and lingers over winter. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with the swine flu virus also have reported diarrhea and

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vomiting. Like seasonal flu, swine flu (H1N1) may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. Possible complications include pneumonia and difficulty breathing.

The H1N1 virus is transmitted person to person in the same way the seasonal flu spreads, through coughing and sneezing of infected people. People can also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. You cannot get the H1N1 flu from eating or handling pork.

Those attending the special meeting were reminded about basic prevention measures like hand washing, staying home when you're sick, developing the habit to cover coughs and not sharing drinks as a personal reminder, as well as a message to convey. Posters, flyers and other display materials encouraging health behaviors were distributed for placement in various locations throughout the county.

Simple everyday measures you can do to prevent the spread of flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.

Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective if soap and water are not available.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, classes and events, church and other group activities and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Most people get better without medical care, but for some, the illness may become more severe. If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, see emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

H1N1 flu can be treated, if caught early, with antiviral medications. These medicines will lessen the duration and severity of the illness. However, they are not effective as a preventive measure.

An H1N1 vaccine is currently being developed. The Livingston County Health Center will continue to give updates about H1N1 vaccine as more information is available. H1N1 vaccine is being provided through the VFC (Vaccines for Children) program. The health center is the only county VFC provider, so all vaccine allotted for the county will come through their office, but then be distributed in the county at other locations. Any nurses who would like to assist in vaccinating county residents for H1N1 should call health center administrator Sherry Weldon for more information at 646-5506.

Vaccine for seasonal flu should be readily available this year. Watch and listen to local media for opportunities to get a seasonal flu shot during September and October, dates to be announced later. The regular seasonal flu vaccine will not be effective against the H1N1 virus.

For more information about H1N1 flu or seasonal flu, call the Livingston County Health Center at 646-5506.

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