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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

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AN UPDATE ON H1N1 AND TWO MAIN CONCERNS

Last week our article presented basic information about the H1N1 influenza, also known as “Swine Flu”.

As of this article, there have been 34 confirmed cases of H1N1 in the state of Minnesota, with only 2 hospitalizations.

This week we will provide you with additional information to keep you, your family, your school and your place of employment safe as well as information on managing general flu symptoms to help you **‘BE SAFE’**.

Where can I find additional information on the H1N1 influenza (a/k/a the swine flu) or other illnesses?

Go to the Minnesota Department of Health’s website: <http://www.health.state.mn.us> OR call them at 1-877-676-5414. The web site is easy to use and will provide you with a wealth of information on many illnesses including the H1N1 virus.

One of the features of the web site is an area which provides signs, posters and other materials that can be printed and used in many different settings such as clinics, workplaces and daycares. These posters deal with “Cover your Cough”, “Stop Spreading the Germs”, “Help Protect your Co-workers”. “Be a Germ Buster – Wash your Hands” and other similar topics.

The site will also provide you with general care information for those who may have influenza symptoms.

What are two primary symptoms of influenza?

Fever and dehydration are two major symptoms to be concerned about.

How do I deal with a fever?

Most people don't know that one way for a body to fight infection is to get a fever. This doesn't necessarily make it a bad thing – it just means that your body is trying to take care of you. However, if the fever exceeds 101 degrees on an oral temperature, dehydration can become an issue. If it exceeds 104 degrees, you need to contact your doctor immediately.

Taking Tylenol or Ibuprofen (unless your doctor advises against it OR the patient has liver disease) is often the best treatment. DO NOT use real aspirin on anyone under 18 years old and ask your doctor what to do for children under 2 years old.

How do I know if dehydration is a problem?

Signs of dehydration include, but are not limited to: being thirsty, looking flushed, having a dry mouth, a change in breathing and/or pulse, sunken/tearless eyes, little or no urine output, dark urine, weakness or dizziness made worse by standing, sleepiness or irritability, headache and – in infants – a sunken “soft spot” on their head. If there is decreased alertness or change in consciousness, call 911 immediately.

The higher the fever, the more cool liquids – especially water – should be consumed. Adults should take in 2-3 quarts per day and children 1 quart per day. Other liquids such as broth, juice (half strength for children), tea, sports drinks or an oral re-hydration formula are suggested. (The latter consists of 4 cups of water, ¼ teaspoon of salt and 3 tablespoons of sugar or honey with lemon, lime or other flavor added if desired. This re-hydration formula should NEVER be given to children under one year old.)

Place cold compresses on the person's forehead, give him/her a lukewarm sponge bath and check his/her temperature every 20 minutes. If they become chilled or start shaking, discontinue the compresses or sponge bath.

Join us next week when “**BE SAFE**” will update you further on this topic and provide you with additional things you can do when dealing with influenza.

This information is sponsored by the Marshall Independent and brought to you by the American Red Cross and taken from information provided by the Minnesota Department of Health. If you have any questions or need further information on the topic covered in this article, please contact either your local Department of Public Health, go on-line to www.health.state.mn.us or contact your local American Red Cross Chapter at 1-507-532-5565.