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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

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H1N1: WRAP-UP

During the past two weeks our articles on H1N1 influenza (formerly known as the “Swine Flu”) presented basic information and suggestions on how to handle potential cases.

As of this article, there have been 39 confirmed cases of H1N1 in the state of Minnesota, with 4 hospitalizations. Three of the confirmed cases were in southwest Minnesota and 29 were in the Twin Cities area. It’s important to note several things:

- The State of Minnesota has stopped testing potential cases of H1N1 and is testing only the most severe cases. This means that there could be other individuals who have H1N1, but are experiencing mild cases.
- States surrounding Minnesota are doing likewise.
- The following number of cases has been confirmed in states around us: 71 in Iowa, 4 in South Dakota, 3 in North Dakota and 766 in Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin and Illinois lead the country in confirmed cases of H1N1. This is primarily due to earlier testing of all suspected cases and confirmation of more because of that testing.
- The only state without ANY confirmed cases of H1N1 is Wyoming.
- Information concerning the H1N1 influenza can be found on the www.PandemicFlu.gov.

This week we will provide you with additional information to help you **‘BE SAFE’** when dealing with any type of influenza.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

In addition to fever and dehydration (covered in last week’s article) other symptoms include: cyanosis, shortness of breath, body aches, cough, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Fever and dehydration are two major symptoms to be concerned about.

What is cyanosis?

Cyanosis is when the person's skin turns gray or blue because they aren't getting enough oxygen. This is a life-threatening condition and must be addressed immediately by calling 911.

What do I do about shortness of breath?

If the person is having a hard time breathing and feels that they are not getting enough air:

- Keep the person calm. Encourage them to take deep, slow breaths. Adults (age 12 and older) should take app. 12 breaths a minute while a child or infant (age 0-12) should take app. 20 breaths a minute. Keep track and work with the person by counting their breaths similarly to what would be done during rescue breathing should they become unconscious.
- If an adult has a scratchy, sore or swollen throat encourage them to drink hot tea with lemon and honey, use throat lozenges and/or gargle with warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt per 8-12 ounces of water).

How do I manage body aches?

- Take a warm shower or bath if you're able to.
- Adults (over the age of 18) can take acetaminophen such as Tylenol or ibuprofen such as Motrin. **DON'T GIVE ASPIRIN OR NON-ASPIRIN PRODUCTS TO ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18!**

What do I do about a persistent cough?

Coughing is the body's main way of clearing breathing passageways. This is particularly important during a choking situation or when there is trouble breathing due to phlegm or mucous.

Use an over-the-counter cough medicine recommended for the situation, age and size of the individual. Follow the package directions for dosage and interval amounts closely. Use cough lozenges if the person is over the age of 12.

What should I do about nausea, vomiting and diarrhea?

These three things can lead to dehydration. It's extremely important to give the person plenty of fluids such as broth, juice (half strength for children), tea, sports drinks that contain electrolytes or other form of re-hydration. Avoid milk products. Give one teaspoon of liquid every 5 minutes. If the person keeps it down for 30 minutes, double the amount every half hour until they can drink on their own.

Emergency action steps:

In ALL cases: call a doctor or 911 if the person:

- has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- has gray or blue lips or skin
- has a fever over 104 degrees orally (adults) or 101 degrees orally (under the age of 12)
- has severe or persistent vomiting
- has signs of dehydration
- has seizures or uncontrolled movements
- is unable to move an arm or leg
- is confused or not waking up
- improves and then gets worse again.

This concludes our series on H1N1 influenza. We will continue to update you on this topic should situations get worse.

Join us next week when our **“BE SAFE”** column will provide you with information on tornados and tornado safety.

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.