

Virginia Department of Health
Protecting You and Your Environment
Lenowisco Health District

News Release

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H1N1 Flu is Present Throughout Virginia, Including the Lenowisco Health District

Wise, Va – Lenowisco Health District Director, Dr. Sue Cantrell advised local residents to continue to protect themselves against the H1N1 flu virus, which has been confirmed across the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Lenowisco Health District, which includes the City of Norton and the Counties of Wise, Scott and Lee, also has confirmed a case locally. This is neither unexpected nor unusual, and serves as a reminder to continue to take appropriate precautions to lessen the spread.

Initially, novel H1N1 flu testing was done to identify the presence of the virus and to determine how widespread the virus was in the Commonwealth. Virginia has now confirmed that the virus is present in communities all across the Commonwealth, and other than in a few unfortunate exceptions, that most cases of the illness are not severe or life-threatening. Thus, it is no longer necessary to do large-scale testing of all patients to identify the presence of the virus in a particular person, city or county. Some public health testing is continuing, to allow VDH to monitor the behavior of the virus. Testing for the H1N1 virus also occasionally is done by private physicians for diagnostic purposes. During these last few weeks of summer, nearly 100% of the influenza being seen in communities in Virginia that are reporting influenza-like activity is the novel H1N1 flu, as seasonal flu has not appeared yet.

A more comprehensive view of the degree to which influenza-like illness is present in Virginia is provided by the Health Department's disease surveillance system. This system monitors the number of people with influenza symptoms who visit selected physician offices, emergency departments, urgent care centers and hospitals throughout the state. Flu testing of a representative sample of patients is done in these facilities to provide a picture of flu activity in the Commonwealth. By analyzing this data, VDH is able to determine how widespread influenza infection rates are in specific regions of the state and to determine whether those rates are increasing or declining. For more information about this sentinel practice monitoring and influenza in Virginia, visit the Virginia Department of Health's website at www.vdh.virginia.gov.

Symptoms of flu typically include fever, cough, nasal congestion, body aches and sore throat, and may also include headache, chills, fatigue and, more common in the case of novel H1N1, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Persons with influenza are contagious for up to 24 hours before they become ill and for approximately 24 hours after symptoms resolve; children and persons whose immune systems are impaired may be contagious longer.

Anyone with flu-like symptoms should protect themselves and others by:

- staying home from work or school until at least 24 hours after fever is gone, without medication to lower temperature, and limiting their contact with others to keep from infecting them; and
- calling their health care providers for advice about seeking care

Everyone should protect themselves and others by:

- covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, and throwing the tissue in the trash after use;

- washing their hands often with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand cleaners, especially after they cough or sneeze;
- limiting close contact with sick people; and
- preventing the spread of germs by not touching eyes, nose, or mouth.

Vaccination is an important part of protecting against both seasonal and novel H1N1 flu virus. Seasonal influenza vaccine is arriving in localities now and should be administered to individuals wishing to protect themselves against seasonal flu, as soon as it is available. Novel H1N1 vaccine is anticipated to be ready October. The CDC expects that there will be plenty of novel H1N1 vaccine available so that anyone who wishes to protect themselves against this new flu strain can do so.

However, the initial focus, which is based on the protecting those at highest risk of developing complications with novel H1N1 flu, will be on reaching out to several groups to make sure they get vaccinated. These include pregnant women, persons who live with or care for children under 6 months of age (parents, siblings, daycare providers), children age 6 months through 24 years, healthcare providers and persons 25-64 who have underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk of complications.

VDH, Lenowisco Health District and many community partners are working together to protect our community from spread of this virus. The Health Department also asks for your cooperation in preventing spread of flu by not visiting patients if you have symptoms of influenza.