

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you may be aware, the number of cases of human infection with swine influenza viruses continues to increase throughout the United States. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has determined that this swine influenza virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. This new organism appears to have all of the features required for a pandemic; including the transmission from human to human and a lack of existing immunity in humans. As a vital part of our community, we would like to take this opportunity to educate you on the virus, how to mitigate its spread and the efforts of the Prince George's County Health Department.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy or malaise, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. However, not everyone experiencing these symptoms may be experiencing swine influenza. If these symptoms are present along with the following exposure characteristics, those individuals may be suffering from swine influenza.

Exposure characteristics:

- History of travel to any of the states or nations with confirmed cases of swine flu in the two weeks prior to their onset of symptoms
- History of contact with an ill person who fits the travel description above
- Swine farmer or recent close contact with swine.

Precautionary measures:

Swine Flu - like seasonal flu - appears to spread from person to person. Any individual experiencing symptoms is asked to exercise normal precautions to avoid infecting others:

- Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, and wiping or blowing the nose. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Use paper tissues when wiping or blowing your nose; throw tissues away after each use.
- Stay away from crowded living and sleeping spaces, if possible.
- Stay home and avoid contact with other people to protect them from catching your illness.
- Avoid shaking hands.

Based on the **current** status of the presence of confirmed H1N1 Swine flu infections in the US and none confirmed in the National Capital Region (at this time) we must be prepared to prevent the spread of this virus utilizing the appropriate personal hygiene measures. The Health Department is working in collaboration with the DHMH, COG, and monitoring CDC and WHO activities. As this pandemic progresses, prevention of the further spread of this agent will require a combination of voluntary isolation and quarantine, and social distancing in schools, daycare centers, work places, churches, public transportation, indoor stadium events, theatre performances, and/or in any location that individuals meet face to face. The closure of schools, work places and other venues is not currently recommended **unless** an individual from that particular facility has a laboratory confirmed case of swine influenza (as in NY

and CA). Based on the current reality of multiple cases spread throughout the USA, I believe it is prudent for all to prepare to implement the **community interventions** recommended by the CDC that will mitigate the spread of the virus in our County.

At present, the Health Department is recommending voluntary isolation for people who fit one or both of the following categories:

1. **Voluntary Isolation** of all ill individuals (adults and children) with influenza like symptoms to their home. These individuals should be encouraged to avoid accessing services in densely populated buildings or clinical areas if they are symptomatic.
2. **Voluntary Isolation** of household members in homes with ill persons. These individuals should be encouraged to avoid accessing services in densely populated buildings or clinical areas if they are symptomatic.

Additional Resources: www.cdc.gov; www.pandemicflu.gov, www.dhmh.state.md.us

The Prince George's County Health Department would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and assure you that we are taking every step to prepare for any situations that may arise as a result of outbreaks elsewhere in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald Shell', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Donald Shell, M.D., M.A.
Health Officer