

## For Immediate Release

**From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

**Re: Positive H1N1 flu case in Branch County**

**Date: May 20, 2009**

**Contact: Steve Todd, Health Officer**

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**Who:** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency received notification from the Michigan Department of Community Health Laboratory that Branch County has its first confirmed case of H1N1 flu virus.

**When:** This confirmation has come within the past 24 hours.

**What:** H1N1 is a new flu virus of swine origin that was first detected in April of this year. The virus has been infecting people world-wide and is spread from person-to-person. Twenty eight other counties in Michigan have also reported cases. There are currently 170 confirmed cases in Michigan and more than 5,700 cases nationwide.

It appears that H1N1 flu spreads in the same way that regular seasonal influenza virus spread; mainly person-to-person through coughs and sneezes of persons who are sick.

**What is being done:** The Health Department has already provided information to the family and other contacts to take precautions to minimize the spread of disease to others. Michigan's Lab took over testing responsibility from the CDC for this virus a couple of weeks ago, which has greatly sped up the notification process and our ability to respond to those who may get sick. The advantage for Branch County is that this case comes after several weeks of dealing with this outbreak and there has been a great deal of communication, education and awareness to communities, schools and healthcare workers on how to deal effectively with this disease.

**What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?** In most people, the symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu. They include:

Fever (100 or higher)

Cough

Sore throat

Body aches

Headache

Chills and fatigue

Occasionally, vomiting and diarrhea

Young children, however, may not have typical symptoms, but may have difficulty breathing and low activity. Typically, flu infections cause mild disease in children, but children under 5 years old are more likely to have serious illness than older children.

**What do I do?** The precautions to the community continue to be the same as with the seasonal flu; washing hands frequently, staying home when sick, don't touch your eyes nose or mouth if you haven't recently washed your hands. The CDC does NOT recommend that schools close if a child tests positive for H1N1 within a school system, as it has not been shown to be effective in limiting the

overall spread of this type of disease. Pregnant women, infants, elderly, asthmatics, diabetics and the immune-suppressed should be especially careful in monitoring their health.

**Is there treatment for those who get sick?**

There are two anti-viral medications that can be used in combating this illness and there are already established protocols for prescribing these drugs. Your healthcare provider will have that information and can let you know if it is appropriate for you to obtain a prescription. Sufficient supplies of these medications are currently available.

**Follow-up.**

Though this is our first case in Branch County case, we do anticipate more in the coming weeks. We will continue to monitor the activity of this virus in the community and work closely with providers, hospitals and schools (if necessary) to provide information and assistance to minimize the impact to the public. All of the information we share with providers as well as information for the public is available on the front page of our website at:

[www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org)

The Community Health Agency has been providing information to the public since this outbreak began is continuing its efforts to provide timely information to the community on important public health issues such as this as they arise. We work very close with Michigan Department of Community Health, schools and local providers to coordinate our response and to provide accurate information.

**Final Thoughts:** A positive case (1) is not a cause for alarm but we do want people to be cautious. It is important that people continue to use common sense and standard precautions to prevent the spread of any illness;

**Recommendations:**

- People with respiratory illness should stay home from work or school to avoid spreading infections, including influenza, to others in the community.
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently to lessen the spread of respiratory illness.
- People experiencing severe symptoms including cough, fever, fatigue, sore throat, chills, headaches, body aches possibly along with diarrhea and vomiting, should contact their physician right away.

**Note:** Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food and a person cannot get swine influenza from eating pork products.