

## **Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

**January 3, 2014**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CDC Health Advisory - Flu**

**(Coldwater, MI).** The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued a health advisory. Increasing reports of severe respiratory infections among young and middle-aged persons due to H1N1 infections have resulted in Michigan's flu activity being upgraded from 'local' to 'regional.' According to Steve Todd, Health Officer for the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, "This upgrade in activity level is due to increases in laboratory confirmed cases of influenza, along with increases in influenza-like illness, which are being reported in multiple jurisdictions across the state. H1N1, a strain of Influenza A that was formerly known as swine flu, has been identified as the predominant source of infection. The CDC is reporting multiple hospitalizations, ICU admissions and some fatalities associated with this virus."

H1N1 was first detected in 2009, when it was called "swine flu" because the virus was similar to one found in pigs. It is now a seasonal flu virus that is found in humans. Steve Todd adds "While counts of confirmed influenza are still relatively low in the tri-county jurisdiction, the Michigan Department of Community Health is warning that severe hospitalizations and deaths have been detected at levels slightly higher than what was observed last year at this time during flu season. One pediatric death has been confirmed in the central region."

Seasonal flu outbreaks occur every year, and typically spike in January and February. Kim Brown, Prevention Services Director, explains "Vaccination is the best protection against the flu and it's not too late to get your flu vaccine. Getting the flu shot can still minimize your chances of coming down with the flu and spreading it to those around you. The flu shot provides protection in just two weeks and that protection lasts for an entire year. Seasonal flu vaccines available through your local health

department, health care provider and/or your pharmacy provide protection against H1N1. Given the seriousness of complications that can occur with flu, we recommend that everyone over the age of six months get their flu vaccine yearly.”

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers the following tips for managing flu symptoms if you or your loved one comes down with the flu:

1. *Stay at home and rest.* If a fever is present, stay home for at least 24 hours until the fever is gone except to get medical care. (A fever is defined as temperatures at or above 100°F or 37.8°C. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
2. *Avoid close contact with well people so that they are not exposed to the flu.*
3. *Drink plenty of water and other clear liquids to prevent fluid loss (dehydration).*
4. *Treat fever and cough with over the counter medications*
5. *Visit your doctor if you or your loved one is very sick or are pregnant or have a medical condition that puts you at higher risk of flu complications (i.e., 65 years and older, young children, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease).*
6. *Take an antiviral medicine as directed, if prescribed.* Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu virus in your body. Antivirals can lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick by 1 or 2 days. They also can prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia. For people at high-risk from complications, (i.e., people under the age of 5 years, 65 years and older, or who suffer from chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, kidney disease, blood disorders, or who have weakened immune systems, etc.), this treatment option can mean the difference between having a milder illness instead of very serious illness which could result in a hospital stay.

However, there are times when seeking immediate medical attention may be needed. Call for emergency care or see a doctor right away if the following warning or emergency signs occur:

***In adults:***

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

***In children:***

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

*In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for **any infant** who has any of these signs:*

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by flu viruses. Flu viruses cause illness, may require hospital stays and can cause death. Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people sick with the flu may experience all these symptoms, while others may not. Kim adds, “Flu spreads from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with flu. People also may get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. That’s why handwashing is such an important measure for stopping the spread of flu. And of course, so is getting your flu shot.”

To learn more about influenza, check out our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and press the Frequently Asked Questions button.

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