

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

**September 8, 2014**

**Steve Todd, Health Officer**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Respiratory Outbreak Suspected in Michigan**

**Coldwater, MI.** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is warning area residents concerning an outbreak of a respiratory disease known as Human Enterovirus 68. This virus has been linked to outbreaks in Colorado, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Georgia. In Colorado alone, the virus was associated with nearly 1,000 child hospitalizations. Now, the Michigan Department of Community Health is alerting local health departments that suspect cases of the illness have been identified in Michigan.

Human Enteroviruses are a relative to the rhinovirus - the virus that causes the common cold. While the virus is fairly common, this particular strain of the virus is not. Symptoms begin like a regular cold, but quickly escalate to more serious conditions. Children with colds that quickly develop wheezing, difficulty breathing, fever, a bluish tint to their skin color and irregular or high heart rates should go immediately to the hospital.

There is no vaccine for this illness. Supportive care is essential. According to Kim Wilhelm, Prevention Services Director for the local health department, "Supportive care such as bed rest and drinking plenty of fluids, combined with fever reducers, decongestants, expectorants and use of vaporizers, can do much to make a sick child more comfortable. Parents, however, are cautioned not to use aspirin with children or young adults under the age of 19 years."

Steve Todd, Health Officer for the tri-county agency, states "We continually monitor our communities for disease occurrence through our on-line disease surveillance systems and will keep our residents updated if or when we have a confirmed outbreak within the tri-counties." To

learn more about how to care for an ill child or how to reduce the risk of transmitting diseases, please visit our website at: [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and click on the Frequently Asked Questions button.

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