



Date: April 30, 2009

General questions: Lauri Stewart 503-884-8797; Gene Evans, 503-269-7950

First probable swine flu case reported in Oregon

Oregon's first probable case of swine flu was identified late Wednesday following testing by the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory.

The Oregon Public Health Department will hold a news briefing at the Portland State Office Building at 11:30 this morning. Details below.

"The probable case was in a Multnomah County adult female who consulted her physician after experiencing flu-like symptoms," according to Dr. Mel Kohn, head of the Oregon Public Health Department. The woman, who was not hospitalized and is recovering normally, had contact with someone who had recently traveled to Mexico and been exposed to the swine flu there, he said.

The specimen from this case was sent to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for further characterization, with final results of testing expected in several days.

"It is very likely that this test will be confirmed by the final step of laboratory testing," Kohn said. "So we are not waiting – we are treating this as a case of swine flu."

This case is identified as probable, rather than confirmed, because the final step of testing has not yet been performed. However, she did test positive with non-typeable Influenza A. Results from the tests done so far by the CDC indicate that more than 95 percent of cases with this test result will ultimately test positive for the swine flu once the final step of testing is finished.

Portland metro area health departments are investigating the situation to identify who may have been exposed to this case, and to slow further transmission.

“Our first priorities are to provide information to people to help them protect themselves and to slow the spread of this new strain of flu virus,” said Dr. Gary Oxman, health officer for Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties.

State and local health departments continue to operate at high alert. The state public health lab continues to receive new cultures from health care providers. So far the other cases have tested negative for flu, but Dr. Kohn said it is likely that there will be additional cases in the future.

“We have expected to see a case in Oregon and the public health system is responding well,” Dr. Kohn said. “Oregon’s state and local public health officials are working together and with federal officials to slow spread of the disease and to continue to protect the public.

“I know Oregonians are concerned and want to know what they can do to protect themselves and their families,” said Dr. Kohn. “This doesn’t change our advice – wash your hands, cover your cough and if you are sick stay home.”

He said these are actions people can take to prevent the spread of the flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve, not with your hand;
- Stay home if you are sick;
- Try to avoid contact with people who are ill; and
- Practice other good health habits such as eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, getting sufficient rest and not smoking.

The Oregon Public Health website www.flu.oregon.gov is updated regularly to provide information such as how to identify swine flu, prevent its spread as well as materials that employers, medical providers, schools, parents and others may use.

Swine flu is a respiratory disease in pigs whose spread to humans has been historically rare in the U.S. Its symptoms are similar to those of normal seasonal influenza such as fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing, sometimes accompanied by runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Eating pork that has been properly handled and cooked will not transmit the virus.

WHAT: State and local officials discuss first probable case of swine flu in Oregon.

WHO:

Bruce Goldberg, M.D., Director of the Oregon Department of Human Services
Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., Director of Public Health, State of Oregon
Gary Oxman, M.D., M.P.H., Health Officer for Multnomah, Clackamas, and
Washington Counties

WHEN: Thursday, April 30, 2009, 11:30 a.m.

WHERE: First floor conference room

Portland State Office Building
800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland