



Town of Lexington

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Office of Community Development, Health Division, Announces Three Probable Cases of H1N1 (Swine Flu) in Lexington

*DPH announces three probable cases of H1N1 Virus (Swine flu) in three high school-age
Lexington residents; Patients have fully recovered.*

May 4, 2009 -- The Lexington Board of Health and Health Division today announced that they have received verbal notification from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) of three probable cases of the H1N1 (swine flu) influenza virus in Lexington. According to DPH, the patients, three high school-age residents, were considered to have a mild case of the disease and have made a complete recovery. The school department has confirmed that these students traveled to Costa Rica during Spring Break. Massachusetts is one of thirty-six (36) states to have confirmed cases of H1N1 Virus.

As a precaution, since last Tuesday, April 28, school nurses are dismissing any K-12 students who are symptomatic and are requiring them to see a physician. Students must bring a doctor's note if they return to school within seven days. It appears that these are isolated cases and the schools will continue to remain open. Active surveillance continues and the school nurses and other faculty and staff will remain at a high level of alertness. Should any signs of increased flu like activity be observed and additional cases confirmed, then the School Department in consultation with the Lexington Department of Public Health will evaluate the need for school closure.

"We will continue to monitor the situation and work closely with our Emergency Management Team, Town Administrators, Public Health Nurse, School Nurses and School Administration and others to increase surveillance in our school community and throughout Lexington." said Gerard Cody, Health Director. "Keep in mind that the virus, like most other flu viruses, is not able to live outside the human body for more than two hours. Therefore, it is not a communicable disease that is easily transmitted in the Environment and it requires close contact. Close contact, in this case, is within a three-foot zone around a sneeze or cough from an infected person. The virus becomes aerosolized in the mist of sputum from a cough or sneeze. It is very important to follow the personal hygiene precautions that we have been hearing about so frequently over the last week. Cleaning an entire school is a distraction from the real preventive measure of practicing good personal hygiene and leads to a false sense of security." said Gerard Cody, Health Director.

The following are the personal hygiene precautions or steps that everyone can take to help prevent the spread of any type of influenza:

- **Wash your hands:** Frequent hand washing with soap, warm water, and disposable paper towels is best. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is useful when you do not have access to soap, water and towels, although not as effective.

May 4, 2009

- **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Throw tissues away and wash your hands. Staying home when sick also helps to keep the illness from spreading.
- **Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.**
This decreases the chance that you will get the flu virus or other germs into your body, or that you will pass the flu to others.
- **Clean surfaces that are touched often.**
Clean things that are touched often, such as door or refrigerator handles; computer key boards/mouse phones and water faucets.
- **Avoid contact with people who are sick.**
Avoid unnecessary contact like holding, kissing, or sharing food, dishes, and cups with anyone who has a cold or the flu. People with young children, weak immune system or a chronic illness should avoid large crowds, if possible. If you get sick, stay home from school or work and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.

For general information on H1N1 Virus (Swine flu) and the status of the nationwide outbreak, visit www.cdc.gov/swineflu. For more information on the Massachusetts response, and [how to care for someone at home who has the flu](#), please visit www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu. A H1N1 Virus (Swine flu) hotline has been set up to help answer any general questions about the disease. Call 1-866-627-7968 and dial 1, or simply dial 211 to access the hotline. For more information or to receive a free copy of "Caring for People at Home, Flu – What you can Do." please contact the Office of *Community Development, Health Division*, Gerard Cody, Health Director at 781-862-0500 x 237. The Lexington Board of Health brought this important message to you.