



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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Southwest Health District awaits results on 13 Swine Flu H1N1 specimens

Of 16 specimens sent to the state public health lab to be tested for Swine Flu H1N1 virus by Southwest Health District, three results have come back negative and 13 are pending, said Public Health authorities today.

“Since the H1N1 outbreak began, the 14-county Southwest Health District has sent a total of 16 specimens to the Public Health Lab for testing,” said Southwest Health District Deputy Director Brenda Greene. “The samples were collected by a number of healthcare providers coming from all parts of the District.”

The District shipped four of the 16 samples yesterday, Greene said.

Late Wednesday, the state reported that the tally of confirmed cases of H1N1 in Georgia remains at four: one case in Cherokee County (which was initially cited as a Cobb County case), one in DeKalb, one in Henry and a Kentucky woman being hospitalized in Troup County who is being counted as a Kentucky case by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Seven “probable” cases await confirmation, Greene said. “There are three in Henry County, one in Clayton County and two from the Augusta area.”

Based on a change in CDC guidelines, testing is going to be limited to hospital patients with flu-like symptoms, she said. Up to now, patients did not have to be hospitalized to be tested for H1N1.

“Any flu-related death is tragic,” Greene continued, “In the United States, roughly 36,000 people die from flu-related causes annually. This outbreak certainly poses the potential to be at least as serious as seasonal flu, if not more so, especially given the fact that there is currently no vaccine against this virus.”

People lack immunity to the Swine Flu H1N1 virus because it is a novel, or new virus, she said, noting that the illness it causes may be more severe and widespread as a result.

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth

Nationwide, the CDC confirmed (as of 11 a.m. today) 896 cases in 41 states, with two fatalities.

“The situation changes rapidly, and we continue to urge the residents of Southwest Georgia to pay attention to the latest updates,” Greene said. “So far, the majority of people are experiencing mild illnesses with this virus, and what we are hoping is that the outbreak will taper off. Until or unless that happens, we will continue to be vigilant and proactive. Our feeling is that being prepared can’t hurt, but not being prepared can hurt.”

Greene also reiterated the best ways to protect yourself from H1N1 and other infectious diseases are to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing; to wash your hands often with soap and water and teach children to do the same; to stay home if sick and keep sick children home from school; and to avoid close contact with sick people.

More information is available from the toll-free information line, 1-888-899-9788, or by going online to www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org or www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/.

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