



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

1109 North Jackson Street
Albany, Georgia 31701-2022
(229) 430-4599 Fax (229) 430-5143 Emergency 888-430-4590
www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org

June 25, 2009

For Immediate Release

Contact: Carolyn Maschke, Public Information Officer

229-430-1969, 229-357-0257; cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us

Southwest Health District confirms two cases of H1N1 in Thomas County

A 12-year-old boy and a 40-year-old man, both in Thomas County, have been identified as the first confirmed cases of H1N1 in Southwest Health District.

“They came in separately and the cases do not appear to be related at this time, but we are early in our investigation,” said Southwest Health District Epidemiologist Jacqueline Jenkins. The onset of the child’s illness was June 19, while the adult became ill on June 20. Both received treatment from the same healthcare provider, who submitted samples for testing, Jenkins said.

“Both of them had classic symptoms of the infection, a spiked temperature, and nausea and vomiting in the boy and cough and sore throat in the man,” she said.

Family members of both patients are receiving antivirals and disease investigators are following up to see if other in contact with either of them are experiencing symptoms, said Southwest Health District Health Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant. Additional cases are likely to be confirmed as the investigation continues, Grant added.

“We know that there are cases of Influenza A in Thomas County and elsewhere in our District, and H1N1 is a strain of Influenza A. Like the rest of Georgia – and the nation – we are seeing higher levels of influenza-like illness than is normal for this time of year,” she said.

As of June 25, Georgia had 65 reported confirmed cases of H1N1, Grant said.

Around 90 percent of all influenza viruses being reported nationally have been the H1N1 strain, she said, citing CDC (National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) data. “So it will come as no surprise to us if more area patients have been infected with the new strain,” said Grant.

If isolated cases of H1N1 crop up in the area, there will be no need to close camps or schools or restrict travel, she said. “Measures as drastic as that would be appropriate if clusters of the illness

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

appeared, or if the virus becomes more virulent,” Grant said. “In the United States, most people who have become ill with it have recovered without requiring medical treatment.”

On June 11, the World Health Organization declared that an H1N1 pandemic was underway, based on the geographic spread of the disease rather than its severity. However, Public Health officials are concerned that the virus could mutate to a more virulent form and roar back when seasonal flu returns.

“We are continuing to monitor H1N1 closely, to educate partners and the public about it and to prepare ourselves and urge others to prepare in the event H1N1 surges in a second, more severe wave in October,” said Grant. “While we hope a vaccine will be available by then, there is no guarantee. So we are emphasizing that individuals have an important role in protecting themselves and their families.”

For now the best defense is to continue practicing tried-and-true measures that help prevent the spread of any infectious disease:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for seven days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.
- Keep sick children at home.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay informed – the situation may change rapidly, so listen for Public Health alerts and recommendations.

For more information about swine flu (H1N1) go online to www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org or visit the CDC website, www.cdc.gov/swineflu/.

###

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