

Florida confirms first swine flu death

By Associated Press

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MIAMI — Florida health officials have confirmed the state's first swine flu death.

The Florida Department of Health said Tuesday the victim was a 9-year-old Miami-Dade County boy. No other information was released.

State health officials say Florida currently has 417 confirmed cases of the swine flu virus, including 143 in Miami-Dade County.

As of Friday, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said there had been 17,855 confirmed swine flu cases nationwide, including 45 deaths in 15 other states. New York, with 13 deaths, has the most.

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius told The Associated Press on Tuesday that schoolchildren may be first in line for swine flu vaccine this fall.

In Southwest Florida, cases of swine flu have winding down but public health officials still want residents to be focused on good hygiene habits to help avoid potential contamination.

In Lee County, there have been 22 confirmed cases of swine flu in which the last case was diagnosed June 9 and there are no pending cases where the public health department is waiting for test results, said Jennifer James-Mesloh, spokeswoman for the Lee Health Department.

"All our cases have been mild and people have returned to their normal activities relatively quickly," she said. "There are no pending cases."

Collier County has had seven confirmed cases and the last case was June 2 with a positive test result, said Collier health spokeswoman Debbie Millsap.

"With all of the cases, people stayed home so there was very little transmission," she said, adding that there was one case where a family member got sick from another family member. "We continue our surveillance."

Although the recent swine flu event seems to have been mild, there is the potential for it to worsen with time and so people need to be vigilant with frequent hand-washing and not being near people who are sneezing or coughing.

The state Surgeon General provided these recommendations:

People with respiratory illness should stay home from work or school to avoid spreading infections, including influenza, to others in the community.

- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Wash hands frequently to lessen the spread of respiratory illness.
- People experiencing cough, fever and fatigue, possibly along with diarrhea and vomiting, should contact their physician.

If you think you have influenza, call your health care provider and discuss whether you need to be seen in their office, emergency department or stay home.

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