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Confirmations on H1N1 virus still coming in for Lee County residents

Fort Myers, FL—Confirmations for H1N1 virus (swine flu) cases have been slowing trickling in for residents affected in Lee County. However, confirmation doesn't change the diagnosis prescribed by a doctor. It does provide surveillance for public health officials to monitor the spread and severity of infection.

"So far, the level of severity of the H1N1 virus has been less than was first predicted by the Centers for Disease Control. For those residents in Lee County that were affected, symptoms have been less than or equal to seasonal influenza" said Judith A. Hartner, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A., Director of the Lee County Health Department.

Since April when the first cases of H1N1 virus (swine flu) were identified in Lee County residents, 104 specimens have been submitted to state laboratories for testing. Currently, only 18.2% (19) have tested positive for the H1N1 virus (swine flu). For the remaining specimens, 31.7% (33) resulted in seasonal influenza A and 40.3% (42) were negative for the H1N1 virus.

For Lee County, the trend appears to be mirroring the state and national trends where the majority of cases are concentrated in children. The median age for confirmed cases in Lee County is 8 years old but range from toddlers to middle-aged adults that reside throughout the county.

Currently with 19 confirmations, Lee County ranks third in the state for the number of H1N1 cases. This represents approximately 14% of the confirmed cases in Florida. Only Dade and Broward Counties have more with 24.03% (31) and 15.50% (20), respectively. However, Florida ranks along with 15 other states which are reporting localized influenza activity, whereas, 18 states are reporting regional or widespread outbreaks.

When flu season should be a thing of the past, this year it has lingered around the country longer than usual. Therefore, the Lee County Health Department urges people to wash their hands frequently, stay home from work or school if they feel ill, and cover their mouths with a tissue or their sleeve if they are coughing. These common sense precautions will greatly reduce the risk of transmission of all flu virus whether seasonal or H1N1 (swine flu).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has advised people with chronic pre-existing conditions and pregnant women to be especially vigilant to prevent against infection. If someone experiences flu-like symptoms they should contact their health care providers or hospital for instructions about receiving treatment.

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For more information on swine flu, visit: <http://cdc.gov/swineflu>. Individuals can also visit www.doh.state.fl.us/DEMO/php/FluInfo for information on swine flu and Florida. Additionally a toll free information line has been established to address the increasing number of calls from the public requesting H1N1 flu information. The number is 1-800-342-3557 and it is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. A local Lee County Health Department live hotline number is 239-461-6180.

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