

WHITMAN COUNTY

Department of Public Health

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H1N1 Influenza Confirmed by State Lab

The Washington State Public Health Laboratory today confirmed that the influenza outbreak at Washington State University (WSU) and Pullman is indeed caused by the novel 2009 H1N1 Influenza A strain. The Whitman County Health Department received confirmation this afternoon of H1N1 influenza virus in two samples sent to the State Lab. Samples tested were from a 19 year old male and a 24 year old female.

WSU reports a slight decline in the numbers of students seen with influenza in the past 24 hours. However, WSU officials estimate that nearly 2000 students have sought evaluation or consultation with providers at the Health and Wellness Service over the past 10 days. Local medical providers in the Pullman area report a slight uptick in influenza cases seen, several of whom are grade school age children.

The spectrum of illness caused by H1N1 seems fairly mild so far, with sudden onset of fever and cough or sore throat. Symptoms last for 3-5 days and the fever is usually responsive to acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Several cases have required intravenous fluids for dehydration.

Antiviral medications (Tamiflu or Relenza) are available for treatment of H1N1 influenza, but most patients do not need treatment and will recover without difficulty. Some individuals have medical conditions that make them a high-risk for complications from influenza. This includes pregnant women, children under age 4, adults over age 65, and persons with chronic lung, heart, neurologic or immunologic conditions. Patients who have a high-risk condition and have the flu should consult their medical provider as soon as possible.

A vaccine is being developed for H1N1 influenza but is still in the testing phase. Federal health officials predict the vaccine will be available near the middle of October. Target groups for H1N1 vaccination, at least initially, will include pregnant women, children age 6 months to 4 years old, children age 5-18 with chronic medical conditions like asthma, parents and caregivers of infants under 6 months old, and health care and emergency workers with direct patient contact.

Until a vaccine is available, Public Health officials encourage everyone to follow these simple steps to help prevent transmission of influenza:

- **Wash your hands frequently. When soap and water are not available use an alcohol based hand sanitizer**

PUBLIC HEALTH * VITAL RECORDS



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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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- **Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes. This is how germs spread.**
- **Clean high-touch surfaces on a regular basis. Normal household cleansers are adequate.**
- **Do not share with others things you put in your mouth, like eating and drinking utensils, smoking materials or lip gloss.**
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately. When tissues are not available, cough in to the bend of your arm.**
- **Stay home if you are sick with symptoms of the flu. Do not return to work or school until 24 hours after complete resolution of fever without the use of fever reducers.**

The Whitman County Health Department is monitoring the H1N1 situation carefully and is in regular contact with Washington State Department of Health officials as well as local medical providers. Everyone is urged to stay informed on H1N1 influenza and up-to-date on the latest developments regarding the outbreak by following alerts posted on the Whitman County website (<http://whitmancounty.org/publichealth>) or the Washington State University blog (<https://hws.wsu.edu/blog/default.asp>).

For more information, please contact Melissa Elkins, RN or Timothy Moody, MD at the Whitman County Health Department (509-397-6280).

