



**DEC. 22, 2011**

## **HEALTH ADVISORY**

### **Increased Reports of Novel Influenza (H3N2) in the United States**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting an increase in reports of a novel H3N2 strain, which has been identified in isolated situations in five states. North Dakota currently has not reported a case related to this event. In total, 11 cases of a novel influenza A (H3N2) have been reported nationwide. The median population for these cases is 3 years of age (11 months to 59 years).

The virus previously has been found in U.S. swine and some cases have been associated with direct or close swine contact as well as person-to-person transmission. Laboratory testing at CDC has confirmed that the novel virus is susceptible to the antiviral medications oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®). The virus is substantially different from seasonal (human) influenza A (H3N2) viruses, but is distantly related to human influenza viruses that circulated among people before 1990. For this reason some adults may have residual immunity against this virus, but it appears that children are widely susceptible to these viruses.

We are asking that providers report any increases in influenza-like illness (fever and cough/sore throat) to the North Dakota Department of Health as well as any patients with influenza-like illness who indicate that they have recent direct or indirect contact with swine within a week of illness onset. The North Dakota Department of Health also is asking providers to report patients presenting with influenza-like illness that may be associated with outbreaks, particularly in children attending school and child care. The Department of Health may request collection of specimens for influenza testing at the Division of Laboratory Services in the event of an influenza-like illness outbreak. All patients who are hospitalized with influenza-like illness without another known cause should have a specimen submitted for testing at the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Laboratory Services. Rapid testing for this virus at this time appears to be sensitive to identifying the virus, though some cases have tested rapid negative.

If you have questions or concerns, or to report an influenza case (including rapid positives), contact the Division of Disease Control at 1.800.472.2180. Reporting of cases or outbreaks also can be done online by going to: [www.ndflu.com/Reporting/OnLineReporting.aspx](http://www.ndflu.com/Reporting/OnLineReporting.aspx).

If you have questions about influenza testing, contact the Division of Laboratory Services at 701.328.6272.

More information on the novel influenza A H3N2 viruses can be found by visiting <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/index.htm>.

---

*Categories of Health Alert messages:*

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

*This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.*