



Columbia County Department of Health

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Public Health Director Nancy Winch states, that the department continues to use the emergency preparedness plan already in place, that includes increased surveillance, protocols, education and awareness about swine flu influenza A (H1N1), in conjunction with the New York State Health Department, Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO) to get the most up-to-date information and protocols. To date there continues to be no confirmed cases of the swine flu in Columbia County.

The World Health Organization has retained the use of a six-phased approach for easy incorporation of new recommendations and approaches into existing national preparedness and response plans. The grouping and description of pandemic phases have been revised to make them easier to understand, more precise, and based upon observable phenomena. Phases 1-3 correlate with preparedness, including capacity development and response planning activities, while Phases 4-6 clearly signal the need for response and mitigation efforts. **Phase 4** has been declared by the WHO which is characterized by verified human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to cause "community-level outbreaks."

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. Everyone can help to prevent the spread of Flu, by washing your hands often, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, if possible staying home from work or school when you are sick, covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

The public is reminded that a toll-free telephone hot line for information has been set up at the New York State Department of Health; please call-1-800-808-1987. More information can be found at www.nyhealth.gov , www.cdc.gov , www.who.int , and the Columbia county web site at www.columbiacountyny.com click on the link to the health department where additional links to more information can be found in the emergency preparedness section.