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Media Contacts:

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; Dianne_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us

Take precautions this summer to prevent H1N1 (swine) flu

Sarasota County Health Department remind parents, daycare centers, summer camp operators, parks and recreation centers to take precautions to prevent the spread of H1N1 (swine) flu and respiratory illnesses this summer. The swine flu virus continues to be widespread, but has generally been mild.

As a reminder, the symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 (swine) flu. Like seasonal influenza, the swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions such as asthma.

Sarasota Health Department officials urge everyone to take these precautions everyday:

- If you are ill with respiratory symptoms, stay home and recover for at least a week after symptoms begin or until you are symptom-free to 24 hours, whichever is longer. Parents should keep sick children home from day care and summer programs until they are well. This might also mean postponing your travel plans.
- Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand cleaners to reduce the spread of respiratory illness. Rub hands together for 20 seconds. This is the amount of time it takes for children to say their ABC's twice.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- People with a sore throat, cough, fever of 100 degrees or higher and fatigue, possibly along with diarrhea and vomiting, should contact their health care provider.

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

Sarasota County Health Department continues to monitor influenza-like illness in our community.

Stay informed. For more information, visit the Sarasota County Health Department's web site www.sarasotahealth.org.