



Whatcom Unified Emergency Management



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NO CASES OF SWINE FLU IN WHATCOM COUNTY

BELLINGHAM, WA— There are no confirmed cases of swine flu in Whatcom County. The Health Department has been investigating several cases where people have traveled to areas with known cases of swine flu. The majority have been determined not to be swine flu cases. Only one sample was sent to the state lab for further testing. Results of that sample are pending.

The Health Department urges Whatcom residents to prevent the spread of flu by following these simple but very effective steps:

- ❖ Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Dispose of the used tissue in the trash.
- ❖ Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use hand sanitizer.
- ❖ Avoid contact with sick people.
- ❖ Stay home if you are sick, and limit your contact with other people.

Swine influenza information and daily local updates on the number of cases can be found at: <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/news/swineflu.jsp>

Local partners continue to monitor the emergence of swine influenza. Whatcom County, Whatcom County Public Health, the City of Bellingham, St. Joseph Hospital, WWU, representatives of the medical community, and Bellingham and Whatcom schools remain on the alert and are meeting daily.

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As of April 30, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirmed a total of 109 cases across Arizona, California, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New York City, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas. Washington state has also sent lab specimens for six probable cases to the CDC for confirmation.

The nation's first fatality from the outbreak has also been confirmed—a 23-month-old child in Houston, Texas. Based on the rapid spread of the virus thus far, public health officials believe that more cases will be identified over the next several weeks. United State case counts are updated daily at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>.

On Wednesday, The World Health Organization (WHO) raised the level of alert to phase 5. Eleven countries have officially reported 257 cases of influenza A (H1N1) infection. According to the WHO's pandemic flu response guidelines, a phase 5 alert is called when there is human-to-human spread of virus in at least two countries in one region.

Greg Stern, the Whatcom Health Officer, remains in close communication with the Washington Department of Health (DOH) regarding the outbreak. Stern has advised local health care providers to test people who have flu symptoms and have traveled recently to places where swine flu is present. **CDC recommends that U.S. travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Mexico.** Changes to this recommendation will be posted at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>. If you have symptoms of flu and have traveled recently to the affected states or countries, contact your health care provider to discuss symptoms and the possible need for testing or treatment.

Swine flu updates are available at the following addresses:

Whatcom County: <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/index.jsp>

Washington State Department of Health: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu/>

US Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>

British Columbia: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/health/>

Travel Recommendations: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluMexico.aspx>

World Health Organization: www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html.

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