



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Residents encouraged to take precautions to prevent flu from spreading

As novel influenza A (H1N1) and seasonal influenza viruses continue to be identified in communities all across Southeast Georgia, local Public Health officials encourage residents to take the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of these illnesses.

"We expect to see these illnesses continue for sometime," said Roger Naylor, Southeast Health District Public Information Officer. "We know the flu, whether it is seasonal or novel H1N1, is in our communities. That's why it is so important for everyone to take the necessary precautions to prevent its spread."

Previously referred to as "swine flu," novel H1N1 is a new strain of flu virus. Like seasonal flu, it spreads mainly from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu are also similar to seasonal flu and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with novel H1N1 also experience runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

The health department is working closely with the local school system and other community partners to monitor flu activity in this county.

While the health department does not have seasonal flu vaccine at this time, it should be available to the public in this county in the coming weeks. Novel H1N1 flu vaccine could be available to residents as early as mid-October.

Appling  
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“Right now, we are waiting on our seasonal flu vaccine to arrive. However, we do not know for sure how much novel H1N1 vaccine we will be getting or when it will come,” added Naylor. “How much novel H1N1 vaccine we receive will determine who will be recommended to get it first.”

In the meantime, there are several important and simple ways residents can **prevent** the spread of these flu viruses:

- **Good hand washing** is absolutely critical and the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective. Wash hands before eating, after going to the bathroom, and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Germs spread when we cough or sneeze. **Cover coughs and sneezes** with your elbows or a tissue. Always properly dispose of used tissues and **avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth**. Germs spread that way.
- It is recommended that all students be up-to-date on immunizations and that everyone get a **seasonal flu shot** when available in the coming weeks. Currently, companies are working to develop a novel H1N1 flu shot. However, it may be mid-October before it is available to the public.
- **If you or your child is sick and/or has a fever, please stay home and limit contact with others to keep from spreading the infection.** Those who are fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine may return to work or school.

The Southeast Health District and the health department will provide new information as it becomes available. For the most current information about novel H1N1 visit the Southeast Health District website at <http://www.sehdph.org/H1N1flu.htm> or the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu).

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