

MEDIA RELEASE

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Update on Health Response to Swine flu (Novel A H1N1)

Health professionals are reminding people that staying home when you're sick means exactly that – stay home, and avoid infecting others.

Swine flu emergency operations centre incident controller Cathy Taylor says people with any influenza virus – particularly swine flu (Novel A H1N1) – who are staying away from work or school, should not go to the supermarket, visit friends, or attend any sporting or community event.

“Anyone who thinks they may have influenza should stay home, keep warm and ensure they drink plenty of fluids,” says Cathy. “It’s really important to stay away from other people as this illness can spread within the community very quickly. Stay home doesn’t just mean stay home from work or school – it means stay home from any place or activity where others are around.”

Ten more cases of swine flu were confirmed over the weekend in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes region, bringing the total number of cases over both regions to 15.

The Bay of Plenty’s health service is now moving to a “manage it” phase in response to the swine flu outbreak. The shift in phase reflects the increased spread of the virus, rather than a change in the severity of the illness.

“For most people H1N1 influenza is a mild to moderate illness, similar to the seasonal influenza we expect each year. Since most people recover from infection without the need for hospitalization or medical care, treatment will be targeted at those who are most at risk,” she says. “If medical advice is needed, people can phone Healthline 0800 611 116 or their GP.”

It’s important that people do not turn up at a medical centre or hospital without phoning ahead, as this could help spread germs to others. “People are asked not to go to an emergency department unless they have a genuine emergency.”

ENDS

Recommended Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Flu

Good hygiene is the most important step in preventing the spread of influenza and other winter viruses:

- Wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and dry hands well on a regular basis
- Alcohol-based hand gel can also be used if soap and water are not readily available
- Try to stay a metre away from sick people.
- If you are ill do not go to work or school – stay at home.
- Keep coughs and sneezes covered, and dispose of tissues in a covered, lined rubbish bin. Remember to wash your hands afterwards.

Monitor your health:

- If you develop flu-like symptoms when you return to New Zealand after travelling, you should seek medical attention immediately.
- Ring first if possible.
- Tell the health care provider who sees you that you have been travelling.

For more information contact:

Carol Wollaston, Communications Manager BOP DHB

Ph: 07 579 8411 mob: 021 227 0452