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**SWINE FLU:
BE CALM - BE PREPARED**

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Swine flu numbers continue to rise in the U.S., but there are still no suspected cases of swine flu in Butte County. The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised the pandemic alert to Level 5, and that should increase our preparations, but not cause alarm, according to Butte County Public Health Department.

“Although it’s natural for people to be concerned that the threat level has been raised, it doesn’t mean we need to be alarmed,” stated Mark Lundberg, M.D. Health Officer at Butte County Public Health. “What it does mean is that we need to increase our level of preparation.”

Public Health does recognize the community concern regarding being tested for this illness. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed as testing will be prioritized based on CDC recommendations, which include exposure risk and hospitalization for influenza like illness. If you have returned from Mexico within 7 days of the start of your symptoms, cared for household members with recent travel history to Mexico, or have had contact with a confirmed case of swine flu please call your health care provider or Butte County Public Health Department at (530) 891-2732.

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

What does this mean for Butte County residents? Lundberg suggests that people continue to take everyday steps to protect their health:

- If you get sick with flu, it is recommended that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

SWINE FLU: BE CALM - BE PREPARED— 2

- If you are sick you may want to consult with your healthcare provider.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth; germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.
- Public Health is not currently advising individuals to wear face masks while going about daily activities.

In addition to these common-sense good health guidelines, people should prepare for what they will do if and when swine flu cases are found in Butte County. For example, if cases are found among school children, and authorities close a school in order to prevent transmission, having a plan in place for child care is a good idea. For more guidelines on pandemic preparedness, check the following website www.pandemicflu.gov.

For information, please feel free to call our Public Health Information line at 1-866-444-2405. Public Health has posted helpful links to swine flu information at CDC and California Department of Public Health web sites on its own web site www.buttecounty.net/publichealth.

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Butte County Public Health Department

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual, community and environmental health.