



### **New Flu Virus (H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub>) Update – May 21, 2009 at 2:00pm**

As of Thursday, May 21, 2009, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department is reporting 14 additional probable cases of the new flu virus (H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub>). The current total for Santa Clara County is 14 confirmed cases and 31 probable cases for a total of 45 cases in the county. Three (3) of these cases were hospitalized and have either recovered or are recovering at home.

As of May 6, 2009, following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department Laboratory has asked the medical community to only submit specimens for testing only from hospitalized patients with pneumonia or with influenza-like illness. Local guidance and instructions for specimen collection, storage and transport were provided to local physicians, hospitals and emergency departments. The cases being reported today have been identified from the backlog of specimens submitted to the Public Health Department Laboratory over the last 3 weeks.

The number of confirmed cases has not changed because confirmatory testing at the state and federal level is taking place on a very limited basis and there are not plans to confirm every probable case. At this time, all probable cases are being considered confirmed H1N1 cases. This is because public health actions do not change based on whether a case is probable or confirmed, and over 95% of the specimens classified as probable have been confirmed as the new H1N1 virus.

Influenza is always a serious disease. Each year in the United States, seasonal influenza causes about 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations. At this time, health officials do not know how severe this new flu virus (H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub>) outbreak will be in terms of illness and death compared with other influenza viruses. It's too soon to predict what will happen or how the virus might change, but this outbreak has the potential to be at least as serious, and possibly more serious than seasonal flu.

The Public Health Department will report individual cases for as long as possible, and then will use a seasonal surveillance system to track the progress of the H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub> flu virus. Routine seasonal surveillance does not count individual cases, but instead monitors activity levels through a local surveillance system based in most of the Emergency Departments of hospitals in our community.

Everyday, we learn more about this virus. The actions and guidance the Public Health Department provides may change in response to what we learn. That is our role, but you too have a role in protecting yourself and your family and it is important to stay informed. Health officials will provide additional information as it becomes available, but right now you can go to [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org) or visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more information.

Information about the new flu virus, H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub>, is also available on the California Department of Public Health's toll-free hotline at 1-888-865-0564 (Monday – Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday/Sunday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.).