

Health Agencies Partner To Provide Flu Advice

Local community health agencies are recommending steps the public can take to minimize the risk of catching or transmitting the flu in the wake of news reports of a swine flu outbreak in Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The number of confirmed cases of the swine flu reported in the United States is rising. As of May 1, there are no confirmed cases in North Carolina.

Local public health officials from the Cumberland County Health Department, Cape Fear Valley Health System, Womack Army Medical Center, the VA Medical Center and the Duke Infection Control Network have discussed the swine flu outbreak. To protect from the virus, the public is advised to take the following precautions, based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control:

- Wash your hands often. This will help protect you from germs.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick. If possible, stay away from work, school and public places when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them.

Symptoms of swine flu are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular flu. They include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

If you experience these symptoms, call your primary care physician or urgent care provider for advice and direction.

The public may call (910) 615-HELP for recorded updates on the spread of the virus in North Carolina, as well as information about how to prevent the spread of flu, as well as symptoms to watch for.

Through the message line, the public can also contact a Registered Nurse at CareLink, Cape Fear Valley's 24-hour call center, for more information if needed.