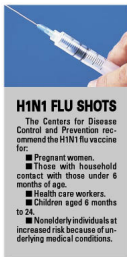


There's no doubt now, H1N1 is here

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Wednesday, 21 October 2009 19:40 -



Medical personnel say no need to panic.

H1N1 has arrived.

Dr. David Hult of Gothenburg Family Practice has seen at least a dozen people with the virus this past weekend.

At Gothenburg Medical Arts in the last 10 days, Dr. Craig Bartruff has treated more people than normal for this time of year.

Both doctors said they've seen patients complaining of sore throats, high fevers, coughs, headaches, chills and body aches.

Gothenburg Memorial Hospital administrator John Johnson said people have been hospitalized with the H1N1 virus but couldn't say how many.

"People with underlying problems are probably more prone to the serious effects of H1N1 especially those with pulmonary issues," Johnson said.

Johnson said a number of hospital officials are talking about regulation of hospital visitors but no decisions about GMH have yet been made.

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District 20 superintendent Mike Teahon said about 100 students were gone from school Monday but that number was down Tuesday.

Student enrollment grades K-12 is about 900 students.

Teahon said it's doubtful school would close because of illness since it isn't recommended by the CDC.

GMH community health coordinator Myra Gronewold said confirmation of the disease in the community shouldn't cause residents to panic.

"There's a risk with driving but you don't ever think about that," Gronewold said. "You could catch H1N1 but you need to put it into perspective."

Both clinics and the hospital are out of the H1N1 vaccine that arrived Oct. 13 but more doses are expected.

At-risk groups get the vaccine first.

The physicians and Gronewold said pregnant women and health care workers received the vaccine last week.

Hult said his clinic also gave the vaccine to a pediatric patient with special needs.

Gothenburg Medical Arts and the hospital each received 20 doses while Gothenburg Family Practice was given 10 by Twin Rivers Public Health Department.

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Hult said most people do fine battling the virus, noting that he's not seen any middle-aged adults perhaps because there may be a natural immunity to H1N1 for people born before 1957.

Bartruff and Hult recommend that anyone with flu symptoms stay hydrated and treat fever and body aches with Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

"Don't go to work or school but stay home and recuperate," Hult said.

If treated within the first couple of days of the onset of the virus, the physicians said they treat patients with Tamiflu which can shorten the duration of H1N1 and help keep it from spreading—especially to other family members.

To stay healthy, Gronewold suggested proper handwashing and eating healthy foods as well as exercise.

Hult said H1N1 symptoms are similar to those of the seasonal flu.

However according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), H1N1 is the only influenza circulating at the time, Hult said.

Once a person has had H1N1, Hult said he or she is unlikely to get it again and doesn't need to be immunized.

Patients are tested for H1N1 through a nose swab.

Bartruff said his clinic sends the swabs to a reference lab in North Platte where a few tested positive for H1N1 but quite a few have not.

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“But that doesn’t necessarily mean the person doesn’t have H1N1,” he said.

Whether or not local clinics and the hospital receive more seasonal flu vaccine is questionable.

Bartruff said it doesn’t sound likely while Hult said he hoped so.

Gronewold said she expects more will be distributed.

According to the CDC, many millions of seasonal vaccine doses are yet to be distributed.

“Most will be able to obtain the vaccine from their usual provider but some will have to get it from an alternative provider,” CDC officials said. “We are still early in the flu season. There is still time for people to get vaccinated to protect them from becoming ill.”

In the meantime, exposure is probably imminent.

“With the recent cold snap, people were exposed to everything because we were in close quarters,” Gronewold said. “Sometimes illness takes longer to get to a smaller community but we’re such a communal society, you’re exposed.”

Gronewold said Gothenburg is fortunate to have excellent health care.

“The clinics are so accommodating and make sure that everyone is treated,” she said.

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For updates about the flu, visit the CDC at www.cdc.gov or call Two Rivers Public Health Department 1-888-669-7154 or visit their Web site at: www.tworiverspublichealth.com.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com 308-537-3636