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## Media Update

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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## State continues to monitor swine flu situation

*Still no suspected or confirmed cases in Alaska*

- **How many cases of swine flu have been reported in Alaska?**

As of Monday, April 27, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is aware of no suspected or confirmed cases of swine flu among Alaska residents.

- **What is Alaska doing to prepare for a possible swine flu outbreak in Alaska?**

The announcement of a national public health emergency on Sunday, April 26, allowed Alaska health officials to request a shipment of antiviral medications to be sent from the strategic national stockpile to Alaska in case they are needed to treat or prevent flu illnesses. The state already had 80,000 courses of antiviral medications on hand as part of our ongoing pandemic preparedness program. DHSS requested about 20,000 more courses to be sent from the national stockpile. These additional courses should arrive in a week.

- **Who will be the first to get these antiviral medications?**

DHSS will work with local governments throughout Alaska to dispense the antiviral medications. The medications will be used primarily for Alaskans who are sick with flu-like symptoms. The medications may also be used to prevent flu in exposed essential personnel. Tamiflu and Relenza are available only with a prescription; they are not sold over-the-counter.

- **If I have not received a flu shot during this flu season, should I get a flu shot now?**

There is no evidence that this year's flu shot offers any protection against swine flu.

- **What can I do to prevent getting swine flu, should it be detected in Alaska?**

Health officials recommend following the same advice given for preventing seasonal influenza:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water.** Use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** Cough or sneeze into a tissue or inside your elbow. Then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- **Stay home if you are sick.** If you have flu symptoms such as fever, body aches and cough, stay home from work or school and avoid public activities for at least five days (seven for children) to prevent spreading the disease to others.

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- **I have a trip planned to Mexico. Should I go ahead with that trip at this time?**

Federal officials are recommending that people do not travel to Mexico at this time unless absolutely necessary. Alaska DHSS health officials support that travel warning.

- **Where can I find more information about swine flu and Alaska's response to the public health emergency?**

DHSS will update its Web site <http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/> with state, national and international information about swine flu. This Web site is an ongoing Web site about preparing for pandemic influenza; it is NOT meant to be an announcement that the swine flu cases reported in multiple countries have risen to the level of being called a pandemic.

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