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Promoting and Protecting Public Health

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Douglas County Health Department Acknowledges Pandemic Declaration

A pandemic declaration by the World Health Organization means little will change with the Douglas County Health Department's response plans.

"We have been continuously engaged with flu response preparations since before the first case of H1N1 flu was reported in the community," Health Director Dr. Adi Pour said. "This announcement further confirms that we have been doing the right thing."

The declaration does not mean that the disease has increased in its severity, only that its transmission has become widespread. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed more than 13,000 cases of H1N1 flu in the United States since the end of April.

"One thing we have learned is that H1N1 has been more severe in healthy young people and adults," Dr. Pour said. "That is one difference it has shown from the seasonal flu."

Work continues on a vaccine for the H1N1 flu, but it is not certain how soon it will be ready, Dr. Pour said. Until then, people are advised to practice good hygiene – wash hands regularly and don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth. It also is important to practice other good health habits such as getting plenty of sleep, keeping physically active, managing stress, drinking plenty of fluids and eating nutritious foods.

As always, Dr. Pour said, it is important to wash your hands, cover your cough and stay home if you are sick.

People also are advised to consider what supplies they might need in the event they had to stay home for a week, the likely amount of time needed to recover from a case of the H1N1 flu. Other planning could involve families preparing for child-care in the event of school closings and employers looking into how they will protect and use their workforce in the event of a severe outbreak.

"So far most of the H1N1 cases have been mild," Dr. Pour said. "The Douglas County Health Department will continue to monitor this situation for as long as it takes."

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