



NEWS RELEASE

EUROPE REGIONAL MEDICAL COMMAND

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

CMR 442 APO AE 09042
U.S. ARMY HOSPITAL – NACHRICHTEN KASERNE
POSTFACH 103180 69021 HEIDELBERG, GERMANY
DSN 371-3317/3049 TEL. 06221-7-3317/3049
STEVE DAVIS CELL – 0162-271-8158

June 18, 2009

Novel H1N1 influenza case confirmed in military community

Preventive Medicine specialists work with USAG Baumholder to contain it

HEIDELBERG, Germany – A case of novel influenza A (H1N1) was confirmed today in an active duty female Soldier living in the Baumholder community who recently returned from leave in Texas.

According to Europe Regional Medical Command Preventive Medicine consultant Col. Evelyn Barraza, the Soldier is currently on home isolation in family quarters on post and receiving antiviral treatment.

Her 5-year-old daughter, who spent approximately six hours Wednesday at the Smith Day Care Center in Baumholder in an age-designated room with 13 other children, was evaluated at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center emergency room Wednesday evening due to fever and started on treatment with Tamiflu. A viral specimen now shows probable H1N1 infection, Col. Barraza said.

USAG Baumholder garrison officials have been notified of the situation and are working closely with the Baumholder Army Health Clinic.

“Our health clinic people have really engaged on this and we are following their recommendations,” said USAG Baumholder Deputy Garrison Commander Fred Wegley. “We will all be monitoring the situation closely and keeping the community informed.”

Wegley said child care center workers have already talked to parents of children who were in the same room.

“I was told the parents understand the situation and do not seem overly concerned at this point,” said Wegley.

The day care center nurse reports that only three of the 13 room contacts attended day care today. However, many families in the Baumholder area are projected to begin block leave and may have travel plans out of the community.

According to Maj. Detra Jackson, the Baumholder Public Health Emergency Officer, all 13 families were contacted by phone and informed of situation and precautionary measures to take. They were advised to keep their child home from day care Friday.

“None of the families have travel plans this weekend, so the travel during unit block leave is not an issue,” said Col. Barraza. “Baumholder Public Health will contact families again tomorrow for additional information, guidance and questions.”

Col. Barraza said two close family contacts were identified yesterday who were started on antiviral prophylaxis due to close contact with the 5-year-old during an overnight stay and during frequent visits with family earlier this week.

“They are all doing well and are presently negative for initial viral testing,” Col. Barraza said. “We will continue to monitor for symptoms.

Wegley said day care center workers and Baumholder Army Health Clinic medical personnel, including a public health emergency officer, will be on hand tomorrow as parents take their children for day care.

“We will talk to each one of the parents and give them information about H1N1 symptoms and prevention,” he said.

The following public health guidance has been provided to USAG Baumholder officials:

1. Work with day care center personnel and commanders to notify parents of the 13 room contacts. Provide information on a possible exposure, H1N1 information, signs/symptoms to watch for, and advise to follow general precautions such as hand washing.
2. Keep the 13 children out of the CDC tomorrow as an added precautionary measure. The H1N1 virus spreads person-to-person in a manner similar to seasonal influenza with an incubation period that is typically 2-4 days. Keeping the children home is one measure to limit the potential for spread. Parents will be advised to monitor children and notify medical personnel if they observe any fever or other influenza like symptoms.
3. Develop a written notice for all parents of the Baumholder Child Development Center with information on H1N1 and current situation.

Col. Barraza recommends good personal hygiene, including thorough hand washing and covering sneezes, to help contain the spread of H1N1 influenza. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov or the U.S. government’s Pandemic Flu Web site at www.pandemicflu.gov offer information about H1N1 influenza and tips on how to prevent its spread.

SIDEBAR: H1N1 information and basis for public health recommendations

Source: Europe Regional Medical Command Preventive Medicine

Novel H1N1 is a new influenza virus causing illness in people in the United States and many countries. The virus is spreading in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread, mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Transmission via large-particle respiratory droplets requires close contact between persons because the droplets do not remain suspended in the air and generally travel only a short distance (< 6 feet). Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Examples of close contact include kissing or embracing, sharing eating or drinking utensils, physical examination, or any other contact between persons likely to result in exposure to respiratory droplets. Close contact typically does not include activities such as walking by an infected person or sitting across from a symptomatic patient in a waiting room or office.

The estimated incubation period for H1N1 virus is similar to regular influenza and is typically 1-4 days. This is the time from exposure to the appearance of symptoms. A person who becomes sick with the H1N1 virus may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms to up to seven days after they get sick. At this time there is no vaccine available to protect against novel H1N1 virus. However, there are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness like influenza.

General preventive measures for people to take to help protect themselves:

- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home when ill to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.

Public health recommendations are for people with novel H1N1 flu to avoid contact with others as much as possible. They should stay home from work or school for seven days after the onset of illness or until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer. Staying at home means not leaving the home, except to seek medical care, and avoiding normal activities such as work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some individuals have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

In the U.S, many patients who have had novel influenza (H1N1) virus infection have had a self-limited respiratory illness similar to typical seasonal influenza. These individuals have not typically required antiviral treatment unless they were at a higher risk for influenza complications or were hospitalized.

Individuals who may have been exposed to H1N1 or are otherwise concerned should monitor their health for fever and other flu like symptoms. If these develop, they should contact their health care provider or seek medical care. Medical personnel will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. Antiviral medications are available at all ERMC Medical Treatment Facilities. Public health authorities are monitoring the situation on a regular basis and providing up-to-date testing and treatment guidance.