Indiana State Department of Health
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Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.
Governor

Gregory N. Larkin, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.
State Health Commissioner

Indiana Schools Quick Facts Resource Guide

Data is up to date as of 8/8/2012 and will change as more information is received

About…Variant Influenza A Virus (H3N2v)

In recent weeks, a number of U.S. residents (including individuals in Indiana) were found to be infected with an influenza virus that is different from regular human seasonal viruses. It is called H3N2v, where the "v" stands for the "variant". This virus has been found in pigs. Most of the people who have gotten sick with this virus have had close contact with pigs (e.g. walking in a swine barn). Please refer to the ISDH influenza website at http://www.in.gov/isdh/25462.htm *for the most current information.*

*Across the state, schools are resuming again for another school year. In an effort to address any questions or concerns that may be raised regarding the possible impact of this virus in the school setting, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) is providing this "*Indiana Schools Quick Facts Resource Guide*". The information included in this document represents the latest data and guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the ISDH as of 8-08-2012*

What is variant influenza A virus?

Type A influenza viruses commonly infect many species of animals, including swine (pigs) and water birds, causing regular outbreaks among these animals.

Most type A influenza viruses that infect animals are very different from human seasonal influenza viruses. When an influenza virus that normally circulates in swine is found in humans, it is called "variant." Although it is a rare situation, cases of variant influenza virus A infections have recently been reported in humans in the United States, including Indiana.

How is variant influenza A spread?

Influenza is usually spread by **respiratory droplets** from coughing or sneezing. Influenza viruses can spread from people to pigs as well as pigs to people. This H3N2 virus has spread mostly from pigs to people, probably when infected pigs cough or sneeze near a human. There have been some cases where one person has gotten H3N2v from another person who had contact with pigs. It is important however, to note that to date, currently there is no evidence that the infection is being spread from person to person efficiently. It is also important to note that variant influenza viruses are **not** transmissible to people through eating properly handled and prepared pork and pork products.

Who is at risk for variant influenza A?

Most human infections with variant viruses occur in people with **direct exposure to infected pigs**, such as people who own pigs or show pigs at fairs. As with other viruses, including **seasonal influenza**, those who are very young, very old, pregnant, or with weakened immune systems are at a greater risk of getting very

sick if they are infected with a variant influenza A virus. Studies have shown that most adults probably have some immune protection against the virus. Children younger than 10 years old, however, probably do not have any immune protection against the viruses. Most people who have gotten infected with H3N2v virus have been children who have been in contact with pigs

Public health officials (the CDC, ISDH and county health departments) are monitoring the situation closely and are investigating each case of variant influenza that is reported in the state to make sure these viruses are not spreading in humans; and to limit further exposure to infected animals.

What are the symptoms of variant influenza A?

Symptoms of variant influenza A are very **similar to seasonal influenza** and usually include:

- Fever (It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue

Sometimes diarrhea and nausea occur in children. Symptoms usually start about 1 to 4 days after being exposed and last 2 to 7 days.

What should I do if I encounter a student or staff member experiencing influenza like symptoms, or I suspect may be infected with H3N2v?

Most people with the flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. Those who are sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care. Individual corporation attendance policies should be consulted and followed regarding time away from school, as well as when it is appropriate to return following a fever or other existing symptoms.

Parents, students, and staff members should be advised to consider contacting their health care provider for instructions regarding the level of care needed, including the necessity of an office visit.

Certain people are at greater risk of serious flu-related complications for the seasonal flu and as well as this novel flu virus infection. Those considered to be at a greater risk include: young children, elderly persons, pregnant women and people with certain long-term medical conditions. Those who fall into these high risk groups should be encouraged to contact their health care provider, reminding them of their high risk status for flu.

If the individual who is ill has had recent contact with pigs or with other sick people, encourage them to relay this information to their health care provider.

Health care providers will determine whether influenza testing and possible treatment are needed. If antiviral drugs are prescribed, these drugs work better for treatment the sooner they are started.

Are any other animals at risk of transmitting variant influenza A virus?

Because this virus is specific to pigs, there is no risk of acquiring variant influenza A from any other pets or animals that may be kept in the classroom. Individual corporation policies should continue to be followed regarding the presence of animals in the classroom. Standard hand washing precautions should continue to be followed for any animal that is handled by children or adults.

How is variant influenza A prevented?

There is no vaccine to protect against H3N2v. But the same everyday preventative actions that are recommended to protect against seasonal flu can help prevent infection with H3N2v. The risk of infection and spread of the variant influenza A and seasonal viruses between people can be reduced by taking a combination of actions:

- **Encourage students, parents, and staff to take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.**
    - Encourage respiratory etiquette among students and staff through education and the provision of supplies (cover coughs and sneezes with tissue or arm and throw tissues away)
    - Encourage hand hygiene among students and staff through education; consider scheduling time for handwashing and provision of supplies (wash with soap and water for 20 seconds)
    - Encourage students and staff to keep their hands away from their nose, mouth, and eyes
    - Encourage routine surface cleaning through education, policy, and the provision of supplies (See CDC resource, "How To Clean and Disinfect Schools To Help Slow the Spread of Flu")
    - Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick until the illness is over. The CDC recommends that individuals stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, measured by mouth) or signs of a fever without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. Individual corporation attendance policies should be consulted and followed regarding time away from school, and when it is appropriate to return following a fever or other existing symptoms.
    - Encourage individuals to avoid contact with sick people.
- Encourage students, parents, and staff to get a yearly flu vaccine to protect themselves against the seasonal flu. The seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against the variant influenza A virus. The CDC recommends annual seasonal influenza vaccination for all persons aged 6 months and older to protect against seasonal influenza viruses; however, seasonal influenza vaccine is unlikely to protect against variant influenza viruses, including H3N2v viruses.

As appropriate, consider offering the following information that has been provided by the CDC, to your students, staff and families:

- Persons who are at high risk for influenza complications (e.g. underlying chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or neurological conditions, or who are pregnant or younger than 5 years, older than 65 years of age or have weakened immune systems) should consider avoiding exposure to pigs and swine barns this summer, especially if ill pigs have been identified.
- Persons engaging in activities that may involve swine contact, such as attending fairs or exhibiting swine, should wash their hands frequently with soap and running water before and after

exposure to animals; avoid eating or drinking in animal areas; and avoid close contact with animals that look or act ill.

- Patients who experience influenza-like symptoms following direct or close contact with pigs and who seek medical care should inform their health care provider about the exposure.
- Patients with influenza-like illness who are at high risk for influenza complications should see their health care provider promptly to determine if treatment with antiviral medication is warranted.

For more information, please refer to:

- ISDH influenza website located at www.in.gov/isdh/files/2012QuickFact_Influenza.pdf
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site:
  - For variant influenza A information: www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu
  - For Seasonal Flu Information for Schools & Childcare Providers: www.cdc.gov/flu/school/index.htm