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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **AN ONGOING MESSAGE...WASH YOUR HANDS, COVER YOUR COUGH, STAY HOME WHEN SICK**

Although we have not seen cases of Swine Flu in New Jersey, yet, there are steps we can take to protect ourselves and our family. "It is important to practice infectious disease control strategies before influenza affects the community," stated Leslie Terjesen, Ocean County Health Department Public Information Officer.

Terjesen wants to remind people that basic infection control practices include washing hands, covering your cough or sneeze, cleaning and disinfecting contact surfaces and staying home from work or school when you are sick. It is possible for the flu virus to survive on non-porous surfaces (doorknobs, telephones, cell phones, computer keyboards, etc.) and can also live on cloth, paper and tissues. Soap, in addition to scrubbing action, helps remove germs. When soap is not available you can use an alcohol-based product (with at least 60% alcohol) to sanitize your hands. "Since flu viruses can live on surfaces that we touch every day our hands can become the vehicle for flu transmission each time we touch our eyes, nose or mouth. It is important to keep your hands away from your face," stated Terjesen.

"Coughing and sneezing into the crook of your arm or sleeve is another way to avoid contaminating your hands," recommends Ella Boyd, VMD, Public Health Coordinator. "Turn your head away from people and use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when your cough or sneeze. Make sure you throw the tissue away and wash your hands immediately to avoid spreading the germs to objects or people you touch."

The symptoms of swine flu are similar to seasonal flu and include fever, muscle and body aches, lack of appetite, coughing and fatigue. Some people have complained of having a sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. If you or a family member become ill with influenza type symptoms, you should contact your health care provider who will determine if influenza testing is needed.

Terjesen also reminds people to stay home from work, school and errands when sick so as to prevent exposing others to your illness. People should not immediately return to work or school when they begin to feel better since their body may be in a weakened state and may be more susceptible to secondary infections.

Freeholder Gerry P. Little, liaison to the Ocean County Health Department, said, "County residents can be assured that the Ocean County Health Department is working with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, area hospitals, healthcare providers and other officials in increasing surveillance of influenza activity. We will continue to advise our county

residents of steps that are necessary beyond the usual precautions that people need to take to avoid becoming ill.”

The Ocean County Health Department recommends that residents review their personal preparedness plan. There are six basic supplies you should stock in your home in case of an emergency: water, food, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, first aid supplies and special items for medical conditions. Families should also create a Family Action Plan and parents should become familiar with their children’s school and daycare disaster plan. Compile a family contact directory with home, work and cell telephone numbers with information for important people and services. Establish emergency contacts outside of your immediate family and make arrangement for family members with special needs. People can also get information on influenza and emergency preparedness plans at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

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