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WHO declaration is not a surprise

On the heels of the World Health Organization’s declaration of a Phase 6 Pandemic in connection with the H1N1 flu, the Kane County Health Department wants members of the public to know that the basic message of preventing the spread of the flu has not changed.

“The declaration does not come as a surprise,” said Health Department Executive Director Paul Kuehnert. “The declaration is based on the spread of the disease, not its severity. But it does emphasize it is here to stay. What we don’t know is how serious or severe this novel H1N1 pandemic will be. That is why our prevention message is more important than ever: Cover your cough, wash your hands and stay home if you’re sick.”

People with an increased risk of severe illness include pregnant women, young children, and people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes and other metabolic diseases, heart or lung disease, kidney disease, weakened immune systems, and persons with neurologic or neuromuscular disease. These people should seek prompt medical attention from their doctors if they begin to show symptoms of influenza-like illness, fever with cough and/or sore throat.

The health department continues to investigate new reports of illness in Kane County. There are currently 58 cases of H1N1 influenza identified which includes one death and eight individuals who required hospitalization. The average age is 15 with a range from 3 months to 58. Over the summer, we will continue to work with our community partners to respond to this public health emergency.

For more information please visit www.kanehealth.com or www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.

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