

Local Camps Dealing With H1N1 Infection

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Three camp counselors from Camp Judaea have Novel H1N1 flu and campers at Camp Ton-A-Wandah are being counted as probable cases. Health officials say sick counselors and campers are being treated and cared for at the camps and that parents of campers at the two camps have now been notified. No campers have been hospitalized.

The health department identified the two camps with confirmed and probable cases today. Some parents have expressed concern and want to know the names of the camps with H1N1 infection. "We certainly understand this concern but HIPAA privacy regulations are very involved and are designed to protect the privacy of the individual patient, said Tom Bridges, health department director. "Public health takes that responsibility very seriously and always tries to do the right thing, both legally and morally, when it comes to protecting the individuals that make up the public in public health. There is some disagreement about whether releasing the names of the camps is permissible, as it is possible, some argue, that such information may potentially compromise the privacy of those involved."

Health officials are working closely with the camps to reduce the spread of the infection to others. "The camps have done an excellent job of screening their campers and quickly isolating those with symptoms of influenza like illness. The health department is also communicating frequently with local healthcare providers and the Urgent Care staff to provide the latest CDC and NC guidelines for treatment and prevention of the flu," stated Linda Weldon, RN, communicable disease supervisor.

Henderson County has 22 camps and camper come from all over the country and even outside of the United States. While the camps have been proactive in identifying children with symptoms and acting quickly to isolate them and give medical attention, parents need to check their children before sending them to camp. "Before leaving home or putting your child on an airplane bound for camp, parents need to make sure children are well," said Weldon. She encouraged parents to contact the camp if they have concerns about sending their child to camp.

According to Weldon, H1N1 is in the community. "It's important for people to know that H1N1 is everywhere, as indicated by the World Health Organization raising its alert level to six. Because it is everywhere that means anyone can catch the flu anywhere. That's why the most important message here is that people everywhere, whether at camp, home, or work, follow the precautions to prevent illness."

To reduce the risk of getting the flu, avoid contact with ill persons; when you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve (if you do not have a tissue) and throw used tissues in a trash can; after you cough or sneeze, wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol based hand gel; and if you think you are ill with flu, avoid close contact with others as much as possible. Health officials suggest staying home if you're sick and seeking medical care if you are severely ill, such as having trouble breathing.

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