

# News from **CHARLIE A. DOOLEY**

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## **Saint Louis County Executive**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: April 27, 2009**

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### **HEALTH DEPARTMENTS COORDINATE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SWINE FLU**

(April 27, 2009)The health departments of St. Charles County, the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County are coordinating efforts to monitor and prepare for a possible outbreak of the swine flu. Although no cases of the flu have been reported in Missouri, officials are taking the threat very seriously.

“We certainly don’t want to generate unnecessary concern, but with a virus of this nature, it’s important that citizens understand we’re taking every necessary step to minimize the danger to the public,” said County Executive Charlie A. Dooley.

Added St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann: “St. Charles County is coordinating with St. Louis County and St. Louis City health officials to monitor the spread of this outbreak. This kind of regional cooperation is essential in safeguarding the public against a potential health crisis.”

“The City of St. Louis is working with CDC and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services to investigate and understand what is happening with the swine flu outbreak, learn more about how it is transmitted and determine how it can be prevented and controlled,” said Dr. Jeffery Lowell, Senior Medical Advisor to Mayor Francis G. Slay. “We are also coordinating within the region to assure that all local health agencies are unified in our approach to surveillance and prevention and control of the disease. We will coordinate disease investigation across city, county and state lines,” added Dr. Lowell.

There have been 40 cases of confirmed swine flu in the United States and two confirmed cases in United Kingdom and Canada, with multiple suspected cases in Europe. Thus far these cases have occurred in the states of California, Kansas, New York City, Ohio, and Texas. Currently there are no deaths reported. As of today there are no confirmed cases in Missouri or Illinois.

Swine influenza is a virus similar to influenza A, a fairly common virus. However, this particular strain is genetically altered, meaning it contains DNA from the human flu, swine flu, and avian flu. Thus far, the virus tends to affect young and healthy individuals (ages 20 to 45). The virus is very contagious and is generally spread by coughing or close contact.

### **What people can do to stay healthy:**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing. You can also use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- Try to avoid contact with sick people. If you get sick stay home from work or school

### **Are there medicines to treat swine flu?**

Yes. Tamiflu and Relenza, prescription drugs, are effective in treating swine flu.

### **How is the region preparing:**

1. ***Increased monitoring*** : health officials are watching emergency rooms for potential cases and monitoring the purchases of over-the-counter cold and flu medicines for any significant changes.
2. ***Professional communication***: releasing a Health Alert to local hospital and medical clinics on what to look for and which lab test to order. We will also continue to meet with our infectious disease specialist at WASU.
3. ***Public communication***: update health department websites with information on swine flu, including prevention, symptoms and treatment. Provide links to the State of Missouri's health web site and the national Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) website.

For more information contact the St. Charles County Health Department at (636) 949-7400 or find information online at [www.scchealth.org](http://www.scchealth.org). In the City of St. Louis call (314) 612-5100 or go online at [www.stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/health](http://www.stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/health). St Louis County's Department of Health can be reached at (314)615-1600 or online at [www.stlouisco.com](http://www.stlouisco.com).

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