Grays Harbor County Morns First H1N1 Swine Flu Death

Local News

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The November 6 death of Conner Woodruff, a 12 year old student of Robert Gray Elementary School, has been linked to the H1N1 (swine) flu virus. County public health officials were notified of the positive test result Friday afternoon.

“This is a tragic death. Our thoughts are with Conner’s family and friends,” said Joan Brewster, Director of the Grays Harbor County Health Department.

“Conner died from a very uncommon complication of the flu in which the heart muscle becomes inflamed,” reports Dr. John Bausher, the Grays Harbor County Health Officer. “This is a rare event that is associated with many different kinds of viral illness such as measles, chickenpox, mumps, and influenza (flu). When it happens, it is heartbreaking.”

Conner’s death is the first in Grays Harbor County to be attributed to the swine flu virus. Public health and school officials are working together with Conner’s family to address parent, student, and staff concerns.

“Swine flu activity is widespread in the county,” Bausher said. “Virtually every school in the county has likely had infected children. It is important to remember that most people who get swine flu get well in 4-7 days without problems. Conner’s death should not be seen as an indication of increased risk in the community, but as a very sad fact of viral illnesses.”

The Health Department began providing swine flu immunizations in schools in late October as vaccine supplies have allowed. “Vaccine is one tool that we have to reduce the spread of the flu and limit the number of cases. That will help limit the number of people who become ill and are at risk of complications,” says Brewster. “We are working to get the doses of vaccine that we have available to us administered in schools and delivered to local health care providers as quickly as possible. That effort will continue until the vaccine is easily available to whoever wants it.”

Vaccination can be an effective tool to fight the flu, but doesn’t take the place of practicing good “health manners.” If you are sick with a fever, stay home from work or school until the fever has been gone for 24 hours or more. Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow. Wash your hands often, especially before eating or preparing food or touching your eyes nose or mouth, and after coughing sneezing, blowing your nose, or using the restroom.

The Aberdeen School District is hosting a meeting for parents of Robert Gray students at 6 pm on Tuesday at the Robert Gray gymnasium. Public health officials will be on hand to answer questions for parents. For continually updated information on swine flu, see the health department’s

website: www.HealthyGH.org

Talking Points for Parents About H1N1

As a parent you know how hard it can be for children to understand stressful situations. The information and s

Tips:

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Keep activities consistent and normal as possible.
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Answer questions openly and honestly, at a level they can understand.
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Allow your children to express their feelings and concerns. Let them know it is okay to be afraid or mad.
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Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
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need even more affection and attention.

Children always need to feel safe and loved. When they are uncertain about situations and afraid they may
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Focus on what your child can do to avoid getting the flu:
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Wash hands frequently – and be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself
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and wash your hands). Again, set a good example by doing this yourself.

Cough and sneeze into the inside of your elbow or a tissue (if a tissue is used, throw it away immediately
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and yourself home when you are sick with a fever too.

Stay away from people who are sick until they are better. Set a good example by keeping your children

Specific Talking Points:

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Most people who get the flu get well at home. Most people with the flu don’t even need to see a doctor.

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Reassure your child that if they become sick you will take care of them and keep them safe.

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The problem that caused this child’s death is very, very unusual.

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You can protect yourself from flu by doing the things listed above.

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sick with the flu.

Vaccine is another tool that can be used to prevent the flu. As more people get vaccinated less people will get

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There will soon be plenty of chances to get a vaccine for swine flu if you want to have one.

Talking Points – H1N1 Death

1. This death is tragic. Our hearts are with the family and friends of this young man.

2. This death was the result of a very rare complication of viral illnesses that affects the lining of the heart. Ma

3. This death is not an indication that the threat of the swine flu is higher than before – it is a reminder

4. Vaccination efforts are happening as quickly as possible.

a. The health department learns each week how many doses it will have available for the following week.

b. We are getting the doses out to health care providers to use for their patients and to children via school clin

c. The health department can vaccinate large numbers of people at one time and is currently focused on scho

d. School clinics must be limited to the students and staff who attend that school. This is in order to assure th

e. Make

f. We expect that the supply of vaccine will improve over the coming weeks and vaccine will be available throu

5. Vaccination is a good tool, but there are other effective tools as well

a. Wash your hands often, especially

i. Before preparing food, eating, or touching eyes nose or mouth

ii. Before caring for a baby or child

iii. After coughing or sneezing into your hands, blowing your nose, or using the restroom

b. Use a hand sanitizer when there is no way to wash hands right away

c. Stay home from work or school when you have a fever over 100 degrees. Stay home until it’s been a

-up clinics will be offered for children who miss their school clinic.
d. Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow. If you cough or sneeze into a tissue, throw the

tissue away and wash your hands as soon as possible.

6. Check website (
www.HealthyGH.org
), local papers and radio stations for announcement of public swine flu vaccination clinics.