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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SWINE FLU UPDATE**

#### **No Cases in Westchester but Westchester County Officials Stress Prevention Measures**

Westchester County Executive Andy Spano and Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman today took steps to reassure the public that they should not be alarmed about swine flu.

There have been no reported cases of swine flu to date in Westchester County.

Spano said the county health department will continue to vigilantly track swine flu and take any needed measures to protect the public.

“I want to reassure residents that our Health Department is closely monitoring the situation and will take whatever actions are necessary to protect our residents,” Spano said. “Swine flu is no cause for alarm, but residents should take sensible precautions like washing their hands and should go to our website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health) to get complete information. They can also call a special 24-hour state hotline, 1-800-808-1987.”

At a news conference today, Dr. Lipsman said swine flu is starting slow and is affecting people with a mild illness similar to the seasonal flu.

“It isn’t hitting hard and it isn’t hitting fast and that’s good news,” Dr. Lipsman said. “If you don’t become sick, there are no special precautions you should take and no medical consultation you should seek. You should practice good hygiene measures, such as washing your hands frequently and covering your nose and mouth when you cough.”

“Currently, there have been no cases of swine flu reported in Westchester County,” he said. “In addition, the county has a computerized surveillance system in place to identify spikes in disease activity in the community, including flu. We will continue to monitor the information that we get from this system very closely as well as continue to communicate with local hospitals and physicians,” he said.

“Although there are no cases so far in Westchester, I can’t stress enough how important hand washing is in preventing the spread of illness,” Dr. Lipsman said. “Frequent hand washing with soap and warm water is the single, best thing that we can all do keep germs from spreading. In addition, if you have flu symptoms, it’s important that you stay home from school or work so as not to spread illness to others. If you do get severely ill, seek medical care, because there is treatment available but it works best if begun within two days.”

Influenza is a virus that is always circulating between birds and pigs and people. Each strain has different genes that make it more or less infectious. Public health professionals are closely monitoring this swine flu because it’s a new virus that people have no natural immunity to. While there is concern that this flu has the potential to become a pandemic, swine flu viruses have caused human infections in the past without turning into a pandemic. There is no swine flu vaccine.

To date, there have been 40 confirmed cases of swine flu in the United States, with 28 of these in New York City. Although the strain matches the one circulating in Mexico, all cases identified in the United States so far have been mild.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people infected with swine flu have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, swine flu can vary in severity from mild to severe, and may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has determined that this swine flu virus is spreading from person to person and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu - mainly through coughing or sneezing of infected people. To help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.