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Swine Flu Spreads Travelers Warned to avoid “*non-essential*” travel to Mexico City

With 40 Human cases of Swine Influenza A (H1N1) virus infections in the U.S., top officials declared a national health emergency Sunday. “Nobody is taking any chances,” said Fran Lessans, CEO of Passport Health, the nation’s largest provider of travel medical services and immunizations. “We are warning travelers to postpone their trips to Mexico City and, if they must go we are counseling them on the use of antivirals to prevent and treat this type of influenza.”

According to the World Health Organization, infections have been confirmed in Mexico and 5 states in the United States. The associated press reports that 12 million doses of flu-fighting medications are being mobilized from a federal stockpile in the event they are needed. The *Belfast Telegraph* reported early this morning that Scotland has also reported two cases of Swine Influenza; the travelers having just returned from Mexico.

“We have influenza immunizations and some of our offices have antivirals”, added Claudie Boulay, Executive Director at Passport Health Miami. “But this is not your typical influenza strain. The influenza vaccine does not specifically protect against the Swine Flu, but it does help boost an immune response since the Swine Influenza strain is also A (H1N1).”

How to protect yourself: Antivirals Tamiflu (Oseltamivir) or Relenza (Zanamivir) are used for treatment when exposure is suspected. The antivirals, which are available at some of Passport Health’s nationwide offices, have proven to be effective against the Swine Influenza virus in laboratory tests. “To be effective, the antiviral regiment must be started within 48 hours of exposure,” concluded Boulay.

She went on to offer some basic tips:

Practice basic good hygiene.

- Wipe common surfaces such as door knobs and phones with chlorine-based products.
- Avoid travel to regions where Swine Flu has been detected.
- Avoid large crowds and leave crowds if you observe someone who is symptomatic.
- If you are symptomatic, stay at home away from large crowds and your workplace.
- Wear a surgical mask whilst in areas where the Swine Flu has been detected and when traveling on airplanes.
- When you cough or sneeze, if you do not have a tissue available, cough into your arm, not your hand. Use of hot soap and water and alcohol sanitizers are proven methods to avoid transmission of the virus.

Call your local Passport Health office: 305-642-9889 or check the latest updates at:
<http://www.passporthealthmiami.com/>

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