

As I am sure you know by now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confirmed 20 cases of swine flu in humans in the U.S. While there are currently no cases in Massachusetts, we take the situation very seriously.

Under the leadership of Governor Patrick and Secretary Bigby, we have prioritized efforts to better prepare for public health concerns - mobilizing multiple agencies in health and public safety to join forces and plan for scenarios similar to this one. Currently several efforts are being undertaken to insure that we minimize illness and harm to the public.

While this is a serious matter and one that requires all Massachusetts residents to be aware and prepared, there is no reason to be overly alarmed. We are still early in the public health investigation of this outbreak but we are encouraged by the fact that the confirmed US cases have involved relatively mild illness and all those affected have fully recovered.

There are steps that everyone can take to help prevent getting or spreading any type of influenza:

1. **Become aware of the facts.** We encourage everyone to visit the CDC's new web site at [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu). We also have some very good information on how to care for someone at home who has the flu on our DPH web site. And DPH has its own regularly updated blog at [www.mass.gov/blog/publichealth](http://www.mass.gov/blog/publichealth).
2. **Practice good health hygiene.** Disease transmission can be significantly reduced by taking the following actions:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
  - Practice good "cough etiquette" by coughing or sneezing into a tissue, or into your elbow instead of into your hands.
  - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
  - If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.

As with every public health investigation, the situation will likely change many times, and we will do our best to keep you and the residents of Massachusetts updated as the situation evolves. Thanks in advance for your patience and for your help in spreading the message about the importance of prevention. Please check our web site, [www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph), for updates.

Sincerely,

John Auerbach  
Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health