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CDC Confirms First U.S. Swine Flu Death from WebMD www.webmd.com
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April 29, 2009 — The CDC today confirmed the first U.S fatality from swine flu -- a 23-month-old child in Texas.

"I can confirm very sad news coming out of Texas that a child has died from the H1N1virus," Richard Besser, MD, acting director of the CDC, said in an interview with CNN. "As a parent and a pediatrician, my heart goes out to the family."

Until now, swine flu cases in the U.S. have been relatively mild compared to cases in Mexico. But health officials have been saying for days that that could change.

"As I've been saying for the past few days, flu is a very serious infection and each virus is unique, and so it's hard to know what we're going to be seeing. But given what we've seen in Mexico, we have expected that we would see more severe infections and we would see deaths, and we've confirmed the first death in this country," Besser told CNN this morning.

Besser said the CDC is not changing its recommendations about reducing the risk of catching swine flu. Those recommendations include:

- Washing your hands with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand gel if soap is not available.
- Avoiding close contact with sick people.
- Not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Staying home if you are ill.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue in the trash afterward, then washing your hands.

If you have flu-like symptoms, Besser recommends calling your doctor and asking if you should come in. But if you have severe symptoms, you should seek medical attention, especially if you have recently been to an area with confirmed cases of swine flu.

As of yesterday, the CDC had reports of 64 lab-confirmed cases of swine flu in California, Kansas, New York City, Ohio, and Texas.

Because the CDC is updating its tally once a day, yesterday's CDC figure does not include another confirmed case in California and one in Indiana; those two cases would put the figure at 66 people with lab-confirmed swine flu in the U.S.

"Thankfully, the majority of cases we have seen so far have not gone to the more severe form, but we have to watch for that, and we're looking very aggressively

around the country for those cases and implementing control measures."

Normal seasonal flu can also be deadly. An average of 36,000 people in the U.S. die of flu or flu-related causes in a typical flu season.

SOURCES:

CNN interview with Richard Besser, MD, acting director, CDC.

CDC.gov