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INFECTION PREVENTIONISTS URGE PUBLIC TO STAY CALM, HEED ADVICE FROM HEALTH OFFICIALS ABOUT SWINE FLU

Washington, April 30, 2009 – The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) today encouraged the public to remain calm, listen to public health authorities and follow common sense health precautions during the swine influenza A (H1N1) virus outbreak.

“This is the time for heightened awareness about proactive steps we all can take to protect our families,” said Christine J. Nutty, RN, MSN, CIC, APIC 2009 president. “Public health officials are monitoring the situation and are making recommendations based on the latest information. We urge consumers to follow the advice of local health authorities and observe good health practices.”

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 have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

APIC advises consumers to contact their healthcare provider if they develop flu-like symptoms and to follow their instructions.

“So far, most US cases have been mild, but this could change and we expect that there will be many more cases of this disease,” said Nutty. “The best defense is for consumers to follow basic health practices – wash hands frequently, cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or a tissue and stay home if you are sick.”

The number one way to prevent infection is through frequent handwashing with soap and water for 20-30 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an antiseptic hand cleaner that contains at least 60% alcohol. APIC also urges consumers to remind healthcare workers to wash their hands before and after coming in contact with patients.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that consumers practice these steps to protect against the flu:

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

More information is available at www.apic.org/swineflu and www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

APIC's mission is to improve health and patient safety by reducing risks of infection and other adverse outcomes. The association's more than 12,000 members direct infection prevention programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for hospitals and other healthcare facilities around the globe. To promote a culture within healthcare where targeting zero healthcare-associated infections is fully embraced, APIC has created the "Targeting Zero" initiative to accelerate both learning and delivery of practical tools for infection preventionists. APIC advances its mission through education, research, collaboration, practice guidance, public policy and credentialing. Visit APIC online at www.apic.org. For consumer-related information, visit www.preventinfection.org.

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