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To: All Media
From: T. Frankovich, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director
Re: Adenoviral Illnesses in the U.P.
Date: August 31, 2018

Public Health, Delta & Menominee Counties, Marquette County Health Department and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) are investigating a cluster of severe respiratory illnesses associated with adenovirus infection in individuals residing in Michigan's central Upper Peninsula (UP). Currently, all six of the patients with confirmed adenovirus infection are adults who have been hospitalized, two of whom have received intensive care. Additional reports of illness are being investigated and laboratory testing is ongoing in order to more fully describe the virus that is causing illness.

Adenovirus is a common cause of cold-like illnesses seen every year, but it can also result in a more serious illness, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. These more significant infections occur most frequently in those with immune compromising conditions or underlying respiratory disease.

Just like flu, it is easy to pass adenovirus infections from person to person through coughing and sneezing. People can also come in contact with the virus by touching surfaces where the virus has landed--like doorknobs and other hard surfaces and then touching the moist parts of their eyes, nose or mouth. As during flu season, we remind people that big public spaces, such as schools, stores and churches, are easy places to spread infections. Several (but not all) of the ill people reported The Island Resort and Casino in Hannahville, MI, as a common exposure. The casino has been undertaking extra cleaning measures to reduce the possibility of transmission in that setting.

Public health encourages people to use the same prevention strategies recommended throughout the year and especially during cold and flu season: stay home when you are ill, cough into your sleeve, wash your hands frequently and especially before eating and contact your healthcare provider if you are concerned about your symptoms. Individuals who have lowered ability to fight infections, have chronic respiratory problems like COPD and asthma, and those who smoke are at higher risk for more severe illness when they get respiratory infections and should aim to reduce their exposure to sick individuals. At this time, there is no vaccine available to prevent adenovirus infections.

People ill with respiratory symptoms should contact their healthcare provider as they normally would, if they are concerned about the severity of their symptoms. Local public health and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) will continue to monitor the situation.