

CDC: 76 children dead of swine flu as cases rise

October 9 2009, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- Health officials said Friday that 76 children have died of swine flu, including 16 new reports in the past week - more evidence the new virus is unusually dangerous in kids.

The regular flu kills between 46 and 88 children a year, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

With swine flu cases increasing throughout most of the country, more deaths are likely, Dr. Anne Schuchat said at a press conference Friday.

She noted that 37 states now are reporting widespread swine flu cases, up from 27 a week ago. A week ago, reports suggested that cases might be leveling off and even decreasing in some areas of the country, but that did not turn out to be an enduring national trend.

"We are seeing more illness, more hospitalizations, and more deaths," said Schuchat, who heads the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

Meanwhile, CDC officials say states have ordered 3.7 million doses of swine flu vaccine for a campaign that started this week. Demand is exceeding supply, at least so far, and people seeking the vaccination can start by contacting their state or local health department to find out where to go, she said.

Health officials also said more data is trickling in from several clinical

trials of the new vaccine, and so far no serious side effects have been reported.

Preliminary information from one study indicates that both a seasonal flu shot and a swine flu shot are effective when given during the same doctor's office visit. However, the government is not recommending that people get the nasal spray versions of the seasonal and swine flu vaccines at the same time.

The nasal sprays contain weakened, live virus, and the government doesn't have data on how a person's immune system would react to exposure to both at the same time, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The CDC doesn't have an exact count of all swine flu deaths and hospitalizations, but existing reports suggest the infection has caused more than 600 deaths and more than 9,000 hospitalizations since it was first identified in April.

On the Net:

CDC swine flu update: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm>

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