

Some Howard Students to Test for Swine Flu

Contributed by Jessica Lewis -- Black College Wire
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Health center cancels appointments to make room for those who traveled to Mexico

Due to the 109 reported cases of H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) in the United States, the U.S. Government has declared a public health emergency prompting Howard University to request that students get tested at five available facilities.

Appointments of students seeking non-essential treatment, or those students seeking testing without any of the symptoms or exposures stated above, are being cancelled to be rescheduled for a later date. Thus far, no Howard student has been diagnosed with the swine flu. Students who recently traveled to Mexico, which is at the center of the outbreak with 176 deaths as of April 30, 2009, are being asked to get tested at the Student Health Center located at 2139 Georgia Avenue NW, the Employee Health Unit within Howard University Hospital (HUH), the Emergency Department in HUH, the Tower Building at 2041 Georgia Ave NW and the Family Health Center located in HUH, according to a University-wide press release.

Preferential treatment is being given to those students with high fever, body ache, sore throat, nausea and diarrhea, who have been in Mexico recently or in contact with people, who have been in Mexico recently, according to the release.

Junior public relations major, Killian Lewis, recently traveled to Cancun, Mexico for spring break, March 14 through March 22. She is among the travelers that the university is giving preferential treatment. However, due to finals, she has not had the opportunity to get tested, but plans to do so within the coming week.

Thus far, she has reported that she is experiencing none of the symptoms associated with the influenza and only heard of the offered testing through a friend.

She said that she never thought of it as a big deal, but she is willing to get tested as is advised.

With no local residents or Howard students being diagnosed, the Howard University Student Association (HUSA) has received complaints regarding the cancellation of appointments not related to the swine flu.

According to the newly-appointed Director for Student Advocacy for the 49th HUSA administration, Corey Briscoe, the complaints are being lodged by students attempting to have medical holds removed from their account. Medical holds can prevent students from registering and viewing grades.

"Students have voiced concerns that they finally have appointments with the center, which has taken so long, and now due to the swine flu the center has cancelled them. Students are basically upset because they don't feel the center has merit to cancel appointments this soon," Briscoe said.

This testing is a precautionary procedure. The CDC reports that infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick.

This swine influenza is contagious and is thought to be spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

The CDC lists preventive measures as staying informed, knowing that influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people, covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue in the trash after you use it, washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth since germs spread that way.

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Jessica Lewis writes for The Hilltop, the Howard University student newspaper, which originally published this article.