

Illness increase investigated in Brown Co

(KNZA)--An increase in cases of a pneumonia-like illness remains under investigation in Brown County.

That word is delivered in a news release issued Wednesday by the Hiawatha Community Hospital.

The release notes that the Brown County Health Department and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment is assisting with the investigation.

According to the release, 61 people have been diagnosed with lower-respiratory infections, including pneumonia and bronchitis, in Brown County. Testing for what the release calls “many viruses and bacteria” has revealed two types, which are rhinovirus and mycoplasma pneumoniae. Both are spread person to person when ill people cough, sneeze, or expose others to their saliva and mucus. Examples noted in the release about how they are spread include shaking hands with someone and touching your eyes, mouth, or nose, or sharing water bottles among a sports team.

Rhinovirus is caused by a virus and is the most common cause of the common cold. Symptoms of rhinovirus are usually minor, including sneezing, sore throat, coughing, and sometimes a fever. Most people feel better within 7 to 10 days, but some people, especially those with weakened immune systems or asthma, may become sicker and get bronchitis or pneumonia. People can get sick with rhinovirus year-round but is more common in the fall and spring.

***Mycoplasma pneumoniae* is a type of bacteria that can cause different kinds of illnesses but people most often get sick with bronchitis and pneumonia. The time it takes between breathing in the bacteria and having symptoms can be between 1 and 4 weeks. Symptoms appear and get worse over a period of weeks, and usually include sore throat, being tired, fever, headache, and a slowly worsening cough that can last for weeks or months. Pneumonia caused by *M. pneumoniae* is usually mild, but more serious pneumonia can develop. *M. pneumoniae* infection is most common in young adults and school-aged children. Infections are commonly spread among families and people who attend or work in crowded settings, like a school. Illness from *M. pneumoniae* can occur at any time during the year but may happen more often in summer and early fall.**

The release encourages anyone with a fever to stay home until fever-free for 24-hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Those with a fever of 100.4 or greater for three days with a cough should seek medical attention.

According to the release, the best way to prevent the spread of germs, including rhinovirus and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* is to:

- **Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using the tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.**
- **Cough or sneeze into your sleeve at the elbow if you do not have a tissue. Do not cough into your hands.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.**
- **Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may have germs on them.**
- **Stay away from others who are sick or when you are sick.**

Many Signals Communications