

Frequently Asked School and Flu-related Questions and Answers

1. **Are schools required to close if any students or staff are diagnosed with H1N1?** Any decision on school dismissal or closure is made at the local level by school and health officials. Factors to consider include how school absenteeism and staffing shortages could affect school operations. School closure is generally not advised unless a large number of staff or students are absent and their absence interferes with the school's ability to function safely.
2. **How long should students or staff diagnosed with flu stay out of school?** Students or staff with flu-like illness symptoms and a fever of 100° F (37.8° C) should stay home. They should not attend school or go into the community, except to seek medical care, until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medication. In some cases, local officials may determine that the exclusion period should be longer.
3. **What if someone comes to school and then begins to show flu-like symptoms?** Students and staff who appear to have an flu-like illness when they come to school—or who become ill during the school day—should be isolated in a room separate from other people if possible, or kept a minimum of 6 feet away from others while wearing a surgical mask until then can be sent home in accordance with district procedures.
4. **What is the best way to be sure individuals who have the flu do not go to school?** Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children and, every morning, staff should check themselves for flu-like symptoms. Ill persons should stay home.
5. **If my child shows flu-like symptoms, should he or she still attend day care or other after-school activities?** Ill students should stay home. They should not attend alternative childcare, after-school activities, or other group activities.
6. **When school administrators learn of students who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu, who should those administrators contact?** School administrators should communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain up-to-date guidance about the reporting of influenza-like illnesses in the school.
7. **What can school administrators do to control the spread of any influenza virus in their schools?** Schools can help reduce the spread of any flu - whether it is the novel H1N1 flu virus or seasonal flu - by promoting good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
 - 1) **What should students and school staff do to follow "good hand hygiene" and "good respiratory etiquette"?** Students and staff should frequently wash their hands with soap and water, or if hand washing with soap and water is not possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not allowed in the school, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful for killing flu germs on hands. They should carefully cover their mouth or nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. (If a tissue is not available, they should cough or sneeze into their sleeves).

Acronyms

CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
ILI	Influenza-Like Illness
LHD	Local Health Department
NPI	Non-pharmaceutical Intervention
NYCDOHMH	New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
NYSDOH	New York State Department of Health
NYSED	New York State Education Department

Glossary

Chronic Medical Condition- a health related state that lasts for a long period of time (e.g. cancer, asthma)

Community Mitigation Intervention or Measure- a strategy for the implementation at the community level of interventions designed to slow or limit the transmission of a pandemic virus.

Environmental Infection Control - routine cleaning and disinfection strategies applied for the environmental management of influenza

Fever- the temporary increase in the body's temperature in response to some disease or illness.

Fever-Like Symptoms/Signs of a Fever- a child has a fever when their temperature is at or above one of these levels:

- 100.4 °F (38 °C) measured in the bottom (rectally)
- 99.5 °F(37.5 °C) measured in their mouth (orally)
- 99 °F (37.2 °C) measured under their arm (axillary)

An adult probably has a fever when their temperature is above 99 - 99.5 °F (37.2 - 37.5 °C), depending on what time of the day it is.

Influenza-Like Illness- an illness characterized by a documented fever =100°F (37.8°C) *and* cough and/or sore throat in the absence of another cause.

Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention- a strategy to prevent the spread of disease without the use of drugs or vaccines

Novel H1N1 Influenza- the new influenza virus that started circulating in the United States in April 2009. Most of the population does not have immunity to this virus. This virus is causing a worldwide pandemic. It has been called "swine flu" because part of its genetic makeup originated in pigs.

Respiratory or Cough Etiquette- use of the following measures to contain respiratory secretions

- Covering the mouth/nose when coughing or sneezing;
- Using tissues to contain respiratory secretions and disposing them in the nearest waste receptacle after use

School Closure- for purposes of this document only, means closing the school and sending all students and staff home.

School Dismissal- for purposes of this document only, means students stay home and the school may stay open for staff.

Three Types of School Dismissals

- **Selective dismissal** is used when all or most students in the school are at higher risk for complications once infected with flu. For example, a school for medically fragile children or for pregnant students may decide to close based on the local situation while other schools in the community may remain open.
- **Reactive dismissal** is used when many students and staff are sick and are not attending school, or many students and staff are arriving at school sick and are being sent home.
- **Preemptive dismissal** is used early during a flu response in a community to decrease the spread of the flu before many students and staff get sick. This is based on information about the spread of severe flu in the region. This dismissal is most effective at decreasing flu spread and burden on the healthcare system when done early in relation to the amount of flu activity in the area.

Social Distancing- steps to reduce contact among people to decrease the risk of spreading communicable diseases. These measures include staying home when sick and school closures.