

Novel H1N1 Influenza Fact Sheet For Students

What is Novel H1N1 Influenza?

- You have probably heard about the Novel H1N1 Influenza that has been causing illness in the United States and other parts of the world. Most people infected with this flu virus in the United States have had mild symptoms, but some people have had more serious symptoms.
- Symptoms of Novel H1N1 Influenza are similar to the "regular" seasonal flu that infects people in the United States every winter. Symptoms of seasonal or Novel H1N1 Influenza include a fever, cough, sore throat, congestions, or runny nose. Other symptoms may occur, including body aches, headache, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

What can I do to protect myself from the Novel H1N1 Influenza?

You can help protect yourself and reduce the spread of seasonal or Novel H1N1 Influenza by taking the following steps:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- If you cannot get to a sink with water to wash your hands, you can use hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Be sure to throw the hand wipes into a trashcan.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of your elbow.
- Be sure to dispose of your used tissues into a trashcan.
- Avoid getting close to people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because germs can be spread this way.

There is not a vaccine at this time for the Novel H1N1 Influenza virus, so it is important that you practice these good habits.

What should I do if I think I am getting the flu?

- If you are at school and start feeling sick, tell your teacher or school nurse. If you are at home, tell your parent or guardian. Your parent or guardian will decide if you need to see your doctor.
- If you think you are getting the flu, it is very important that you do not go to school or go anywhere else—such as the mall, a friend's house, or sporting events—where other people could be exposed to flu germs.

Will schools close because of the H1N1 flu?

- If Novel H1N1 Influenza continues to spread, some schools may need to close to prevent more students from getting sick.
- If a school is closed, all school events, including sporting and social events, will also be cancelled.
- Your health and school officials are closely watching this Novel H1N1 Influenza situation and will make the decision about whether a school needs to be closed.

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School Continuation

If there are no cases of confirmed or suspected Novel H1N1 Influenza in your child's school, students can attend classes and the school will remain open.

Even though most cases of Novel H1N1 Influenza in the United States at this time involve only mild illness, flu spreads easily. It is too early to determine true disease severity. Therefore, it is essential that no student comes to school with flu-like symptoms.

If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people could be exposed.

- Symptoms of flu-like illness include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, congestion or runny nose. Some additional symptoms may be experienced with H1N1 (swine) flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.
- Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

Students exhibiting symptoms will be dismissed from school following local protocols.

School Closure

If Novel H1N1 Influenza continues to spread and more students become ill, it may become necessary for local officials to close some schools for a period of time.

School officials will work with their school medical director and local health officials (county or city) to monitor the situation and make all decisions in consultation with them and state officials.

The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among children in order to reduce their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.

If a school is closed, all related on and off school campus events, including sporting and social events, will be cancelled.

It is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to consider options in advance of the event of a school closing.

Arrange for child care in other than a group day care setting.

Healthy Practices to Help Prevent Illness

Parents can help protect their children and reduce the spread of seasonal or Novel H1N1 Influenza by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
- Teach your children to dispose of used tissues properly and promptly after use.
- Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick.

For additional information please see the State Health Department website

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