

Questions and Answers about the new H1N1 Flu Guidance

Q: How do the Communicable Disease Control's (CDC) new flu guidelines differ from the old and what are the facts?

A: The guidelines apply to any flu virus during the 2009-2010 school year. The H1N1 (swine flu) is similar to other flu-like illness. In the past year, it was no more severe than the "normal" seasonal flu, but appears to be much more likely to spread. Based upon facts and not fear, the new guidelines offer steps for parents, students and school staff to take.

Fact Students and staff with flu-like symptoms should stay home until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without use of fever-reducing medications (ibuprofen, acetaminophen)

Fact Anyone can get the flu. So far, with the 2009 H1N1, the largest number of cases has been in patients between 5-24 years of age. Students can and do get sick with the flu every year and schools may act as a point of contact, where students can easily spread flu to other students and their families. H1N1 is the flu and the flu is the flu...*Stay home...*

Fact H1N1 is spread by large respiratory droplets. Three (3) feet is an approximate distance to safely stand/sit from a person that is showing signs/symptoms of the flu.

Fact Families, students, and school staff can keep from getting sick with H1N1, as with any contagious disease, by:

- Practicing good handwashing- cold water with soap is fine as long as good technique is practiced. Anti-bacterial hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Don't share items like drinks and food.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, NOT into your hand.
- STAY HOME- staying home keeps the virus from spreading to others. A doctor's note is not needed for readmission to school.

Fact Flu viruses may be spread when a person touches droplets left by coughs and sneezes on hard surfaces (desks, door knobs) or objects (keyboards, pens) and then touches his/her mouth or nose. Disinfecting these surfaces beyond routine cleaning has not proven to be effective. It's more important for staff and students to practice good personal hygiene, especially before eating or touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

Fact The practice of closing schools and conducting stringent disinfection is unnecessary and ineffective to prevent flu infection.

Fact Signs of a fever: temperature taken by oral thermometer reads 100 degrees F or higher. Without a thermometer the person may feel warm, appear flushed or is sweating and shivering. Fever may be the first indication of flu or flu-like illness, even before the onset of coughing, body aches and other symptoms.

Fact Just as with seasonal flu, it's more important to stay home than to seek medical care unless there are underlying medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, etc.) or symptoms become severe. A call to your doctor is appropriate if you have concerns.

Fact The seasonal flu vaccine, while it does not protect against H1N1 flu, has proven highly effective in slowing the spread of "regular" flu and lessening the symptoms in those who do contract flu. Doctor's offices, clinics and public immunization programs have this vaccine available, and it is advisable to take this simple precaution as soon as possible as flu season approaches. A vaccine for H1N1 flu is expected to be available in late fall, although at the beginning it may be available only for the most susceptible populations

There is a lot of media coverage on H1N1. Unfortunately much of it is not accurate. For up-to-date facts, not fear, please visit the web site: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>

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