

Preparing for H1N1 Flu

An Action Kit for Schools (Grades K-12) in New York State



The purpose of *Preparing for H1N1 Flu: An Action Kit for Schools (Grades K–12) in New York State* is to provide basic information and communication resources to help school administrators KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE FLU and to respond to scenarios presented by the potential large-scale spread of H1N1 flu during the 2009-2010 School Year.

Many of the materials in this packet are designed as “stand alone” documents that can be modified for use by school administrators

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

November 2009

Dear School Official:

This packet of information provides practical tools that will help you and your staff prepare for the next wave of H1N1 flu. It is expected that the current outbreak could worsen in the coming weeks and months. The contents of this kit include sample documents that may be adapted for your local needs. **These items are designed as “stand alone” documents that can be modified for use by school administrators.**

Thus far the H1N1 flu virus has resulted in mostly mild to moderate illness, similar to seasonal flu; however that could change. Even if the virus stays the same, very few people are immune to it, which means illness could be pervasive.

There are important issues to consider immediately, such as whether your school has policies that discourage employees and students from staying home when they have flu-like symptoms. Can someone with flu-like symptoms be isolated (physically separated) until they go home? Some schools, in collaboration with their medical director and local health departments, may choose to close for a period of time because of excess absenteeism rates among students, faculty and staff, or if the outbreak becomes more severe. If school closes, consideration needs to be given to what will happen to students who rely on free and reduced-price meals.

We trust your school is already working on H1N1 preparedness. If not, we encourage you to call your local health department for advice and guidance. They will be glad to help you get started.

In addition, you will find helpful, current information at www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, and www.schoolhealthservices.org.

Questions and Answers About H1N1 and Seasonal Flu

Q1. Why should we be concerned about the spread of flu in schools?

A1. Large numbers of students in close proximity to each other create an environment conducive to the flu spreading to other students and their families. So far, the largest number of cases of H1N1 flu has been in people between the ages of 5 and 24 years old.

Q2. Which students and staff are at higher risk for complications from flu?

A2. Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems from the flu can happen at any age. However, children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as pulmonary disease, including asthma, diabetes, neuromuscular disorders or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older are more likely to get complications from the flu. On the other hand, people age 65 and older are less likely than younger individuals to be infected with H1N1 flu.

Q3. What can families, students, and school personnel do to reduce the chances of getting sick and spreading flu?

A3. Families, students, and school staff can reduce their chances of getting sick with flu in several ways:

- Get vaccinated against both seasonal and H1N1 flu as soon as you can.
- Practice good hand washing. Students and staff members should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing and before eating.
- Cover your cough! The main way that the flu spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes. So it's important to 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 hands.
- Stay home if you're sick. Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their germs to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

Students, staff, and their families must take personal responsibility for helping to slow the spread of the virus by practicing these steps to reduce their chances of getting sick or spreading the flu.

Q4. What should I do if I'm pregnant and I work or attend a K-12 school?

A4. Pregnant women working in or attending schools should follow the same guidance as the general public about staying home when sick, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from flu and should speak with their doctor as soon as possible if they develop a flu-like illness to find out whether they should take antiviral flu medicines. Any person at high risk for flu complications should do the same. Early treatment with antiviral flu medicines is recommended for pregnant women who have the flu. Pregnant women are part of the first priority group to receive the H1N1 flu vaccine.

Q5. How long should a sick student or staff member stay home?

A5. A sick student or staff member with symptoms of flu should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or signs of a fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Sick people should stay at home, except to go to the doctor's office, and should avoid contact with others. Keeping people with a fever at home may reduce the number of people who get infected.

Q6. Can the virus live on surfaces, such as computer keyboards?

A6. Yes, flu viruses may be spread when a person touches droplets left by coughs and sneezes on hard surfaces (such as desks or door knobs) or objects (such as keyboards or pens) and then touches his or her mouth or nose. However, it is not necessary to disinfect these surfaces beyond routine cleaning. Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.

Q7. Why would one school dismiss students and another school continue to remain open?

A7. School action steps will vary based on the severity of the situation and the impact it is having in the school. Decisions for school dismissal are made at the local level, based on the number and severity of cases in the school and community. Because the impact of flu on a community will differ from location to location, the steps that are taken will also be different.

Also, certain schools may have a large number of students who are at high risk for complications from the flu (such as pregnant teens). These schools may decide to close based on the local situation while other schools in the community remain open.

Action Steps for Teachers and Staff to Reduce the Spread of Flu

Take the following steps at ALL times, not only during a flu pandemic, to help reduce the likelihood of students and yourself from getting sick with flu.

- **Educate and encourage students to cover their mouth and nose** with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.
- **Remind students to practice good hand hygiene** and to wash their hands as often as necessary.
- **Be a good role model** by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- **Observe for sick students and send them to the school health office or other designated location for further evaluation.** Sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- **Clean surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with the cleaning agents that are normally used in these areas.
- **Teachers should stay home when sick.** Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- **If you are pregnant, have asthma, diabetes, or other conditions that put you at higher risk for complications from the flu,** you should **speak with your doctor as soon as possible** if you develop symptoms of flu-like illness. People at high risk of flu complications who develop flu can benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.
- **If you have children,** plan ahead for child care if your child gets sick or his or her school is dismissed.

For more information:

- See: www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org.
- NYSDOH H1N1 Flu Hotline: 1-800-808-1987
- New York City call 311
- 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
- 1-888-232-6348 (CDC TTY)

Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- Be prepared to support home learning activities if the school makes them available. Your child's school may offer web-based lessons, instructional phone calls, and other types of distance learning. Have school materials, such as text books, workbooks, and homework packets available at home.
- Plan activities for your children to do while at home such as games, books, DVDs, and other items.
- If you are employed, plan on how you will arrange for the care of sick household members or children dismissed from school. Talk to your employers about workplace policies that may affect you.
- If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about school re-opening.

To prepare for flu during the 2009-2010 school year parents should consider the following action steps:

- Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.
- Consider the use of fever-reducing medications that contain acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Motrin). These medicines can be given to people who are sick with flu to help bring their fever down and relieve their pain. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) should not be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- As the sick person begins to feel better you may decide to stop giving fever-reducing medicines. Continue to monitor their temperature until the temperature has been normal for 24 hours.
- Plan for child care at home, for at least 5 days, if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Identify a separate room in the house for care of sick family members. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for anyone who gets sick.
- Have games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained while at home.
- Talk to your school about their flu pandemic or emergency plan.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu:

- **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes. Use a tissue and dispose of it properly after use. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands. Clean hands** with soap and water often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.
- **Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention.** Warning signs include:
 - Fast breathing or trouble breathing
 - Bluish or gray skin color
 - Not drinking enough fluids
 - Not waking up or interacting
 - Not urinating or no tears when crying
 - Severe or persistent vomiting
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

- **Check with your doctor about any special care** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. For the H1N1 flu this includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, and people younger than 65 who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease). Seasonal flu is a higher risk than H1N1 flu for people 65 years of age or older.
- **If possible, a caregiver for the person who is sick should be someone who is not at high risk for complications of flu.** If that is not possible, the caregiver should wear a facemask, if tolerated.
- **Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines** for sick household members who are at high risk for complications of flu.
- **Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers;** it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome
- **Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks or electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

For more information:

- See: www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org.
- NYSDOH H1N1 Flu Hotline: 1-800-808-1987
- New York City call 311
- 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
- 1-888-232-6348 (CDC TTY)

Action Steps for Parents to Help Protect Children and Family from the Flu

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may reduce the likelihood of getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.
2. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol are also effective if soap and water are not available.
3. **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 hands.
4. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your health care provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
- Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.
- Talk to your school administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

For more information:

- See: www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org.
- NYSDOH H1N1 Flu Hotline: 1-800-808-1987
- New York City call 311
- 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
- 1-888-232-6348 (CDC TTY)

Action Steps for Parents of Children at High Risk for Flu Complications

Children with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic conditions, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, or who are pregnant are at higher risk of having complications from flu. In addition, all children younger than 5 years old are at higher risk of flu complications compared to older children. If you are not sure if any of your children are at higher risk for flu complications, please check with a doctor.

Keep children at high risk for flu complications from getting sick with the flu

- **Make sure your child's hands are washed** for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub (if soap and water are not available) often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Keep your child away from people who are sick.**
- **Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches** with cleaning agents that are usually used.
- When there is flu in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of flu, **people who are at risk of complications from flu should consider staying away from public gatherings.**
- If flu is severe in your community as determined by NYSDOH, talk to your doctor and child's school to **develop a plan on how to handle your child's special needs.**
- **Get your child vaccinated** for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

Recognize if your children are sick

Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can result in a delay in responding to their illness. It is important to watch carefully for the signs and symptoms of flu or unusual behavior that may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of flu include:

- Fever
 - A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, your child might have a fever if her or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches and fatigue.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Please share this information with your child's teacher or other caregivers, so they can tell you if they notice your child is not feeling well.

Tips for taking care of high risk children with the flu

Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick. This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child.

Keep your sick child at home until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor.

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids as recommended by your health care provider (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants, Pedialyte®) to keep from being dehydrated.

If your child has a fever, use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor recommends based on your child's age. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

Keep your sick child in a separate room (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.

For more information:

- See: www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org.
- NYSDOH H1N1 Flu Hotline: 1-800-808-1987
- New York City call 311
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- 1-888-232-6348 (CDC TTY)

TIPS FOR PARENTS: If Schools are Closed

If the H1N1 flu results in increased absenteeism among students, faculty, and staff, some schools may opt to close. In the event school closes, your children may have to stay home for an extended period of time. To prepare for this possibility, the following resources will help you plan activities for your children while they're at home. These resources are not intended to replace classroom lessons or curricula, and do not provide a substitute for their academic school work meeting the New York State Learning Standards. Check with your local school to learn about specific home-based plans for your children's school.

These educational resources may also not be consistent with an Individual Education Program (IEP) for students with disabilities. Please note that website modifications and information on adaptive technology to support individuals with disabilities should be obtained from your local school. Additional information is available at www.w3.org/WAI.

Library Resources

Through the New York State Library there are resources for children and young adults. These resources include the following web addresses:

- www.ipl.org/div/kidspace/ Internet Public Library allows you to submit a question, a large number of links per each subtopic; grades K – 8.
- www.ipl.org/div/teen/ Internet Public Library allows you to submit a question, a large number of links per each subtopic; grades 9 – 12.

There is also a New York Online Virtual Electronic Library (NOVEL) database that parents may register to use. Through NOVEL, families can access sublinks that include:

- Kids Search 68 full text reference magazines
- K-8 Searchasaurus primary search reference materials
- Elementary/middle Groliers Online use of encyclopedias
- K – 12 Pro Quest Platinum full text periodicals

For information on how to register for the sublinks available on <http://novelnewyork.org>, please contact the New York State Library at 518-486-6012.

Parents may also want to contact their local public library for additional suggestions of materials that may be borrowed.

Internet Resources

The following web sites offer valuable learning opportunities for students:

www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm?pageid=113582&orgid=16188 Virtual assistance technology center, free downloads to meet a variety of software needs, resources of assistive technology

www.ala.org/greatsites Approved by the American Library Association, an interactive magazine and a series of sublinks; K-8

www.crews.org/curriculum/sp/ Lessons and activities for special needs

www.dotolearn.com/ Activities in reading, math, motor skills, and life skills; special needs population

www.education.noaa.gov National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, activities and facts; K – Higher Education

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PBS_kids PBS sponsored encyclopedia and dictionary, articles by topic; K-12

<http://headlinespot.com/for/kids/> News by subject; level varies per topic, K - 12

www.loc.gov/families Library of Congress sponsored, stories, primary sources; K-12

www.nps.gov/webrangers National Parks Services activities and facts; K – 12

www.nytimes.com/learning/students/index.html News stories, and activities; 6 - 12

www.pbs.org Public Broadcasting System (PBS), videos, news, schedule of TV shows, documentaries, science, history, the Arts; target population: Middle/high school+

www.pbskids.org PBS sponsored, videos, games, TV programs; elementary

http://school.discoveryeducation.com/homeworkhelp/homework_help_home.html videos and tutorials for basic mathematic operations; upper elementary/middle

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/homeworkhelp/math/web-resources.html> Resources for help with algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus; middle/high

www.smithsonianeducation.org Activities in science, history, and art; elementary/middle

www.sproutonline.com PBS sponsored, activities, craft projects, Sesame workshop; preschool-K

www2.scholastic.com/browse/activities.jsp Activities by topic; Pre K - 8

www.timeforkids.com/TFK/ articles current and past; K - 6

www.webmath.com A help site for math problem; choose topic or level; K -12

www.weeklyreader.com/ Articles and activities; categorized for Kids and Teens

www.whitehouse.gov/kids Connects to the Whitehouse, write the President, government news, history of the Whitehouse; middle/high school

SAMPLE LETTER/E-MAIL TO PARENTS #1

Update on H1N1 Flu Situation

Use this letter to let parents know our school is still open, although schools in the region may be closed

Dear Parents,

We have been monitoring the H1N1 flu situation very closely in partnership with our school's medical director and the county health department so that informed and timely decisions can be made about potential school closures. Thus far, no closures have occurred in our district.

We would like to remind parents that students should not come to school if they are sick or have symptoms of influenza-like illness. Symptoms include: fever (100 degrees F. and above) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that he/she not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs.

It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer for those times they are not near a sink. 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 keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Germs spread that way.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Help your children to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of flu.

You may also get information at www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION]. Thank you for your cooperation to keep our children and our schools healthy.

SAMPLE LETTER/E-MAIL TO PARENTS #2 “School Closure” because of increased absenteeism

Use this letter to inform parents schools are closed because of increased absenteeism

Dear Parents,

In consultation with the school district’s medical director and our local health officials, we have decided to close our school as of [DATE]. This decision was made because so many of our students, faculty and staff are absent due to flu-like illness.

We know that many people are inconvenienced when school is closed and regret any problems this may cause you.

The virus easily spreads from person-to-person, so it is important that anyone with fever and flu-like symptoms stay home. The sick person should not go out in public unless it is absolutely necessary, for instance to seek medical care. Most people with mild flu symptoms can be cared for at home utilizing the following recommendations:

- Keep the person who is sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.
- Have the sick person drink a lot of liquid (juice, water).
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat or muscle aches, use over-the-counter pain relievers.
- CAUTION: Check with a health care provider if you think there may be a medical reason, such as an allergy, not to give these products to the sick person.
- NEVER give aspirin to children and teenagers because of the possibility of a dangerous side effect called Reye’s syndrome.

- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently with soap and water. If you go out in public, carry hand sanitizer and use it often. Rubs, gels or wipes are all effective, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Always dispose of hand wipes properly. Use hand sanitizer according to label instructions.
- Keep your hands away from your face. Germs spread that way. The flu virus can live a long time on surfaces such as hand rails and door knobs and easily be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose and mouth.

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will re-open. Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at, www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION]. Thank you for your cooperation to help our children and our community.

SAMPLE LETTER/E-MAIL TO PARENTS #3 “Schools Re-open”

Use this letter to inform parents schools are re-opened

Dear Parents,

In consultation with the school district’s medical director and local health officials, a decision has been made to resume classes on [DATE]. Students may return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.

Please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home. Symptoms include: fever of 100 degrees F. and above **and** cough or sore throat.

Even though school is re-opening, some in the community may still be sick. **Please don’t send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home.** Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick in the weeks or months ahead. If more people do get sick, schools may need to close again. We will continue to give you any important information.

Please continue to encourage and promote good hygiene practices with your family.

- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently with soap and water.
- If you go out in public, carry hand sanitizer and use it often. Rubs, gels or wipes are all effective, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Always dispose of hand wipes properly. Use hand sanitizer according to label instructions.
- Keep your hands away from your face. Germs spread that way. The flu virus can live a long time on surfaces such as hand rails and door knobs and easily be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose and mouth.

We are looking forward to seeing your children again.

You may also get information at, www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

SAMPLE MEMO FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

This is a sample memo you can send to faculty and staff if health officials advise schools to close

To: All employees
From:
Date:
Subject: School closure

After consulting with local health officials we have decided to dismiss (i.e., temporarily suspend) classes at our school at this time. This measure is being taken because of increased absenteeism among students/faculty and staff [OR] to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the H1N1 flu virus that is having such a serious health impact.

While schools are closed **[include specifics about how people will get paid, if such is the case. If no decision has been made, state that school district administrators are working out the details and they will be informed as soon as possible.]** We appreciate your patience and cooperation in this very difficult situation.

Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, it is important that anyone who has a fever and/or flu-like symptoms stay home.

Everyone should continue to practice good hygiene. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizer according to label instructions if you are not near a sink. Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes. Germs spread that way. Use a tissue or cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not into your hands. Dispose of used tissues properly. Try to stay at least six feet away from someone who has flu-like symptoms.

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will re-open. Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at [LOCAL TELEPHONE NUMBER], www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, or [LOCAL WEBSITE].

Thank you for your cooperation to help our children and our community.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “A”

Use this type of press release to announce that schools remain open

For release (DATE)

Contact: (PIO name and number)

LOCAL SCHOOLS PREPARE FOR H1N1 FLU

School and county health officials are working together to monitor the H1N1 flu situation locally, so that informed and timely decisions can be made about any potential school closures. Thus far, no closures have occurred in our district.

“School will remain open,” [NAME] said. “To keep the flu from spreading, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with flu-like symptoms will be sent home.”

Flu-like symptoms include: fever (100 degrees F. and above) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue. 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 would be exposed to flu germs. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

A decision to close a school cannot be made lightly. The best reason to close a school is if many teachers, students and staff are out sick and classes cannot be conducted safely. All decisions on school closures will be made by local school officials with advice from their local health department.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu 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).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer for those times they are not near a sink. 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 keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Germs spread that way.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Health officials stress that recommendations may change if the local situation worsens. Parents are urged to monitor media reports. For more information, visit www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “B”

Use this type of press release to announce that schools are closed because of increased absenteeism

For immediate release: [DATE]

Contact: [PIO name and number]

HEALTH OFFICIALS ADVISE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS DUE TO ABSENTEEISM

In consultation with local health officials [SCHOOL/SCHOOLS] has determined it necessary to close as of [DATE] due to increased absenteeism. The decision was made based on the number of students, faculty and staff who are sick with flu-like illness.

“We are working closely with health officials to address this situation and will keep parents updated with any important information,” [NAME] said. “We know that many people are inconvenienced when school is closed and regret any problems this may cause you. “

The virus easily spreads from person-to-person, so it is important that anyone with a fever and flu-like symptoms stays home. The sick person should not go out in public unless it is absolutely necessary, for instance to seek medical care.

The following recommendations have been provided by the State Department of Health:

- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.
- Have the sick person drink a lot of liquid (juice, water).
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat or muscle aches, use over-the-counter pain relievers. Choose either name brands or store brands—either choice is fine. CAUTION: Check with a health care provider if you think there may be a medical reason, such as an allergy, not to give these products to the sick person. NEVER give aspirin to children and teenagers because of the possibility of a dangerous side effect called Reye’s syndrome.

- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently with soap and water. If you go out in public, carry hand sanitizer and use it often. Rubs, gels or wipes are all effective, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Always dispose of hand wipes properly. Use hand sanitizer according to label instructions.
- Keep your hands away from your face. Germs spread that way. The flu virus can live a long time on surfaces such as hand rails and door knobs and easily be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Health officials stress that recommendations may change if the local situation worsens. Parents are urged to monitor media reports. For more information, visit www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “C”

Use this type of press release to announce when schools re-open

For immediate release: [DATE]

Contact: [PIO name and number]

HEALTH OFFICIALS ADVISE SCHOOLS MAY RE-OPEN

In consultation with local health officials, the decision has been made to re-open [SCHOOL/SCHOOLS] on [DATE]. Students may return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.

“Please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home. Symptoms include: fever of more than 100 degrees F. and cough or sore throat. **Don’t send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home,**” NAME said.

Even though school is re-opening, there are still some people who are sick. Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick in the weeks or months ahead. If more people do get sick, schools may need to close again. Please continue to encourage and promote good hygiene practices with your family.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that’s about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer for those times they are not near a sink. 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 keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Germs spread that way.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Help your children to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

More information is available at www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS “A”

Use these messages to announce that schools remain open

- At this time, the county health department has advised us that students who are not ill can continue to attend classes and school will remain open
- Custodial staff will continue to clean classrooms and common areas regularly.
- **To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with flu-like symptoms will be sent home.**
 - Flu-like symptoms include: fever (100 degrees F. and above) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue.
- 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 would be exposed to flu germs.
- Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.
- Because closing schools can cause many problems, a decision to close a school cannot be made lightly. The best reason to close a school is if many teachers, students and staff are out sick and classes cannot be conducted safely.
- All decisions on school closures will be made with advice from school administration, the school district’s medical director, and the local health department. Many things will have to be considered in deciding what to do.
- Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu 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).

- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer for those times they are not near a sink. 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 keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Germs spread that way.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Help children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.
- Recommendations may change if the local situation worsens. We will make public announcements through the media.
- You may also get information at www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS “B”

Use these messages if schools are closed because of increased absenteeism

- In consultation with local health officials, we have decided to close our school as of [DATE].
- This decision was made because so many of our students, faculty and staff are sick with flu-like illness at this time. Schools will be closed for [GIVE TIMEFRAME] until the rate of absenteeism decreases.
- We know that many people are inconvenienced when school is closed. We regret any problems this may cause you and greatly appreciate your cooperation.
- The virus easily spreads from person-to-person, so it is important that anyone with a fever and flu-like symptoms stays home.
- The sick person should not go out in public unless it is absolutely necessary, for instance to seek medical care. However, most people with mild flu symptoms can be cared for at home, utilizing the following recommendations:
 - Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.
 - Have the sick person drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
 - Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person
 - Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
 - For fever, sore throat or muscle aches, use over-the-counter pain relievers. Choose either name brands or store brands—either choice is fine. CAUTION: Check with a health care provider if you think there may be a medical reason, such as an allergy, not to give these products to the sick person. NEVER give aspirin to children and teenagers because of the possibility of a dangerous side effect called Reye’s syndrome.
 - Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently with soap and water carry hand sanitizer and use it often if you are not

near a sink. Rubs, gels or wipes are all effective, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Always dispose of hand wipes properly. Use hand sanitizer according to label instructions.

- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread that way. The flu virus can live a long time on surfaces such as hand rails and door knobs and easily be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose and mouth.
- We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will re-open.
- Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at, www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE] or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS “C”

Use these messages to announce that schools will re-open

- In consultation with local health officials, we have decided to resume classes in our school on [DATE].
- Students may return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.
- Because the flu spreads easily from person-to-person, please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home.
 - Symptoms include: fever of 100 degrees F. and above **and** cough or sore throat. **Don't send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home**
- Sick students should not return to school until their temperature has been below 100 degrees F. for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Even though school is re-opening, there are still some people who are sick. Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves.
- This means more people could become sick in the weeks or months ahead. If more people do get sick, schools may need to close again. Please continue to encourage and promote good hygiene practices with your family.
 - 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).
 - Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer for those times they are not near a sink. 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 keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Germs spread that way.

- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Help children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- We will continue to give you any important information.
- Please also stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at www.nyhealth.gov, www.flu.gov, <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>, www.schoolhealthservices.org, [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].

HELPFUL WEBSITES & TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Your Local Health Department:

(Find the number by visiting www.nysacho.org)

Other online resources:

www.nyhealth.gov

www.flu.gov

<http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>

www.security.state.ny.us/preparedness/

www.nysed.gov

www.schoolhealthservicesny.com

www.ready.gov

www.redcross.org

New York State Department of Health H1N1 Flu Hotline:

1-800-808-1987

New York City residents call 311

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Information Line:

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

1-888-232-6348 (TTY)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The NYSDOH will provide updated guidance as additional information and CDC recommendations become available. Frequently updated information is posted on the NYSDOH website at http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/information_for_schools.htm

Frequently updated information is available on the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm or www.flu.gov

The New York State Education Department provides guidance, support, and direction to administrators, faculty, staff, and the school community. A compilation of all H1N1 information provided by NYSDOH and NYSED is posted at <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>

The New York Statewide School Health Service Center provides guidance and support to school health professionals. Frequently updated information is posted at <http://www.schoolhealthservices.org/>

Links and contact information for your local (county) health department is available at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/lhu/map.htm>

English and Spanish educational materials are available below and include:

- [Influenza \(H1N1 and Seasonal\) Educational Materials Order Form](#)
- [Got the flu? Here's what to do: Ask for a mask! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¿Tiene la gripe? Sepa lo que debe hacer: pida una mascara \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep Your Germs to Yourself! \(pocket card\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Quédese con sus microbios: No salga de su casa y evite el contacto directo con los demás \(folleto\)](#)
- [Stop! Do you have Fever? Cough? Trouble breathing? Please tell the staff immediately! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Alto - Aviso Importante Para Todos Los Pacientes Tiene Usted - Fiebre? Tos? Problemas? Para Respirar? \(cartel\)](#)
- [Visitors are welcome ... but the flu is NOT! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Las visitas son bienvenidas ...La gripe NO! \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep your Germs to Yourself! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¡Quédese con sus Microbios! \(cartel\)](#)
- [What to do? - When someone at home has the flu \(brochure\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¿Qué se debe hacer? cuando alguien en la casa tiene gripe \(folleto\)](#)

- [Keep our School Healthy \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¡De usted depende parar la gripe! \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep our School Healthy \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Mantengamos la escuela sana \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep Your Germs to Yourself - Stay Home and avoid close contact with others \(poster\)](#)

APPENDICES

Date: August 31, 2009

To: District Superintendents of Schools, Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools, Administrators of Charter Schools, School Principals, Directors of School Based Health Clinics, Local Health Department Officials

From: New York State Department of Health, Division of Epidemiology

**2009 - 2010 School (K-12) Guidance:
NOVEL H1N1 INFLUENZA FLU VIRUS
Please distribute to all appropriate staff.**

Introduction

This document is an important update to the joint New York State Department of (NYSDOH) and New York State Education Department (NYSED) guidance distributed May 12, 2009 regarding the response to human infections with novel* H1N1 flu virus in educational facilities outside of New York City.

The NYSDOH and the NYSED are providing this guidance to suggest ways for reducing exposure of students and staff to flu during the 2009-10 school year. The guidance expands and modifies previous guidance and focuses on numerous layered non-pharmaceutical, community-based measures that might be useful during this outbreak of novel H1N1 flu virus to reduce disease transmission and associated illness. This guidance is based on the severity of novel H1N1 influenza continuing to exhibit severity similar to that observed during the spring of 2009. If novel H1N1 influenza exhibits greater severity, NYSDOH and NYSED may issue additional guidance, which may recommend additional non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated interim guidance regarding schools (K–12), a technical report, and communication tool kit on August 7, 2009. Recommendations contained herein are consistent with the recommendations provided by the CDC.

This document is current as of 2:30 p.m., 08/31/2009 and is subject to change based on ongoing surveillance and continuous risk assessment. Additional guidance about NPIs may be issued if novel H1N1 influenza becomes more severe in comparison with the spring of 2009.

For guidance related to educational institutions in New York City, see the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) website at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cd-h1n1flu.shtml>.

*Since the issuance of this guidance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York State Department of Health have discontinued the use of “novel” when citing H1N1 flu.

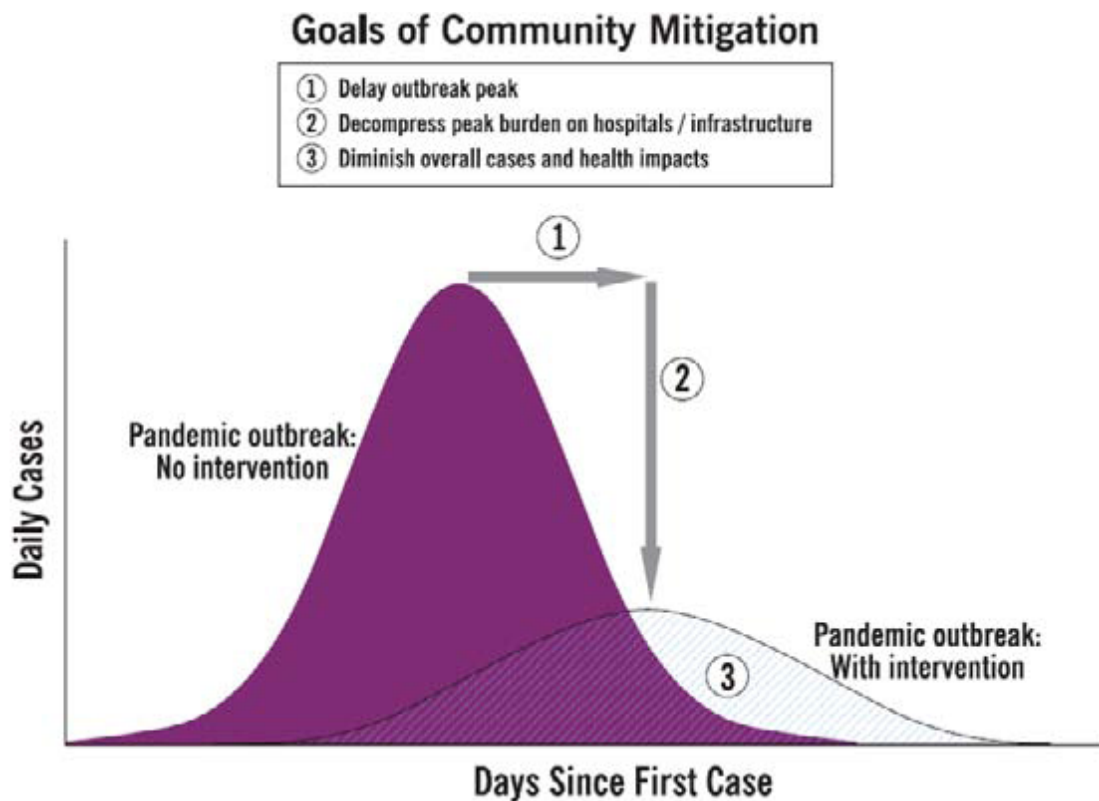
Key Points and Changes from May 12, 2009 Update

- The primary means to reduce the spread of flu in schools continues to focus on early identification of ill students and staff that should be excluded from school and all school-related activities when ill, and to encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- The recommended exclusion period has changed for most situations. People with influenza-like illness (ILI) should stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines. This is a change in exclusion guidance from May 12, 2009, which recommended that people with ILI stay home until at least 7 days after the onset of symptoms and fever-free for the past 24 hours. Longer exclusion periods may be appropriate in some situations.
- Decisions related to measures taken in response to novel H1N1 flu virus remain at the discretion of local education and health officials, taking into account the specific needs of the community and the impact of school absenteeism and staffing shortages.
- Schools are strongly urged to closely monitor ILI activity and work with their local health departments to report absenteeism and/or school dismissal on a daily basis.
- Reactive school dismissal is not recommended unless absenteeism of students or staff makes it impossible to maintain a normal functioning or safe environment.
- The selective dismissal of some schools with high numbers of high-risk students or staff may be considered.
- The CDC or NYSDOH may recommend pre-emptive school dismissals in the future, based on changes in virulence, severity, and impact.

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Goals

The goals of community mitigation measures are to slow the spread of the disease in a community to: 1) decrease exposure to both regular seasonal flu and H1N1 flu while minimizing disruption of day-to-day social, educational, and economic activities; 2) delay the peak of the disease in order to “buy time” for the production and distribution of a vaccine against this new virus; 3) reduce the total number of people who get sick, need hospitalization, or die from the flu; and 4) reduce the “surge” or demand on healthcare systems resulting from those who are sick from the flu.



Background

Approximately 1.9 million students and 190,000 staff attend the more than 4,100 public and nonpublic schools (K-12) in New York State (outside of New York City). Schools play a critical role in protecting the health of their students, staff, and the community from contagious diseases such as H1N1 flu. Children are very susceptible to getting this new virus and schools may serve as an amplification point for spread of this new virus in a community.

The CDC estimates that by implementing these recommendations, schools and health officials can help protect approximately one-fifth of the nation’s population from flu. Schools serve communities in numerous other capacities beyond their basic charge of educating children. Therefore, communities have a responsibility to work together to

balance the benefits of keeping students in school with the risks of illness among students and staff. The experience and information gained from regions that had significant outbreaks in spring 2009 demonstrated that the possible benefits of preemptively dismissing students from school (dismissing students before an outbreak becomes severe) are often outweighed by negative consequences. The decision to dismiss students should be made locally and should balance the goal of reducing the number of people who become seriously ill or die from the flu with the goal of minimizing educational and social disruption and safety risks to children associated with school dismissal. Such a decision requires a strong collaborative partnership between the school administrator, the school district's medical director, and the county department of health.

While the impact of the H1N1 flu virus is being closely monitored, it is not possible to predict the exact situation in fall 2009. Based on the flu activity this summer in the southern hemisphere, it is likely that more communities may be affected, reflecting a wider transmission. If information indicates that the flu is causing more severe disease than during spring 2009, or if other situations develop that might require more aggressive mitigation measures, the CDC or NYSDOH may issue additional recommendations.

It is critical to keep in mind that even "routine" seasonal flu can be a severe disease. Each year in the United States, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized for flu-related complications; and about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes. Given this fact, unfortunately, as in every flu season, we need to be prepared for the possibility of additional cases including severe cases and even deaths. Preventing the spread of flu requires all of us – schools, families, businesses, and government – to cooperate and work together.

Illness Reporting and Monitoring

NYSDOH, NYSED, CDC, and local health officials will continue to monitor information and continually assess whether changes are needed in these or other H1N1 flu disease control measures, including monitoring disease spread and severity. CDC and the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with state and local health and education agencies and national nongovernmental organizations, have implemented a school dismissal monitoring system for the 2009-2010 school year. This monitoring system will generate a real-time, daily national summary data of the number of school dismissals and the number of impacted students and teachers.

The NYSDOH has developed its component of this system, which will provide state and local officials with data on school absenteeism and dismissal in the state, outside of New York City. This information will then be provided to the CDC. School health personnel are strongly encouraged to monitor for and report ILI and absenteeism as part of an overall effort to detect, report, and minimize the spread of flu. More information and guidance on this reporting system will follow. <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/>

Recommended Interventions to Implement Now, Assuming Similar Conditions and Severity as in Spring 2009

The NYSDOH and the NYSED believe that early, broad and sustained community mitigation strategies are effective in reducing the impact of a moderate to severe pandemic. These community mitigation interventions are scalable and flexible so that local public health and education authorities can use these tools based on the local situation. A comprehensive, layered mitigation approach aims to reduce disease transmission and associated illness during a flu outbreak.

It is important to continuously promote and facilitate fundamental infection control measures in school settings, not only during a flu pandemic. Schools should be proactive, developing plans for monitoring illness among students and staff, keeping sick students and staff home, developing contingency plans to cover key staff positions when employees are home ill, and communicating with parents and staff on the importance of the exclusion recommendations. Plans should focus on protecting people at high risk for flu complications, such as those with chronic medical conditions (for example, asthma, which affects nearly one in ten school-aged youth).

All members of the school community – staff, parents and students, should take an active role in limiting the spread of infection. This will require increased vigilance among parents, caregivers, and school staff to identify students and staff with ILI, in particular looking for respiratory symptoms associated with fever.

Influenza-like illness is defined as a fever of (100° F [37.8° C]) and cough or sore throat. Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children, and faculty and staff should self-monitor every morning for fever, or signs of fever, and sore throat, or cough. Students/staff members should be alert for signs such as trouble breathing or not drinking enough fluids. They should also be alert for skin rashes or any signs that they are more uncomfortable than expected with the flu. Some people also experience a runny nose, congestion, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. At this time, the NYSDOH is closely monitoring ILI activity and associated school closures. We strongly urge school administrators to communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain guidance about reporting of ILI in the school.

It is suggested that schools review policy implications for students with perfect attendance. Schools may also want to consider options to continue educating students who are home through instructional telephone calls, homework packets, internet-based lessons, and other distance-based learning approaches.

1. Stay home when sick

Students or staff with ILI should stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen, etc.). They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. Note: this is a change in the exclusion guidance from May 12, 2009, which recommended that people with ILI stay home until at least 7 days after the onset of symptoms and fever-free for the past 24 hours. **Ill students should not attend alternative childcare or congregate in settings outside of school such as extracurricular sports or clubs, libraries, or shopping malls.**

Decisions about lengthening the exclusion period should be made at the community level, in conjunction and consultation with local and state health officials. More stringent guidelines and longer periods of exclusion may be considered for individuals returning to a setting where high numbers of people at high risk may be exposed.

2. Separate ill students and staff

Sick students and staff should be excluded from school and all school-related activities. Students and staff who appear to have ILI or become ill during the school day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from others. If a separate room is not available, maintain at least a 6-foot distance between ill persons. Immediately report any illness to the school nurse or other designated school official. Dismiss ill individuals in accordance with district procedures.

If a student or staff person reports to the school nurse with ILI and cannot be isolated from others, it is recommended that a simple facemask (i.e. surgical mask) be provided to her/him to prevent possible transmission of the virus to others while waiting for transportation home. It is recommended that school nurses and staff who come into close contact with persons with ILI in isolation use appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g. surgical mask).

3. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

Schools can help promote ways to reduce the spread of flu, including hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Hand Hygiene:

Students and staff should practice good hand hygiene to help reduce the spread of flu. Hand hygiene includes traditional hand washing (with soap and warm water, lathering for a minimum of 20 seconds) or the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60% alcohol or greater) when soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty. If alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not allowed in the school, hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may also be useful for killing flu germs on hands.

Schools should provide adequate facilities for hand washing and promote proper hand washing before meals, after recess or physical education, and other times, as appropriate. NYS Education Department (NYSED) information on hand soaps, hand cleaners and hand sanitizers is available at http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/facplan/GreenCleaning/Green_Cleaning_update_050207.html

Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette:

The flu virus spreads from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes. Therefore, it is important that students and staff cover their mouths or noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue appropriately. If no tissue is available, using the inside of the elbow (or shirtsleeve) to cover the mouth or nose is preferable to using the hands. Always perform hand hygiene after handling dirty tissues or other soiled material.

4. Routine cleaning

The flu spreads easily. When people cough or sneeze, they spray droplets of flu virus through the air. These germs can be inhaled by someone else, or they can settle on surfaces where they get on people's hands. Special attention should be paid to cleaning spaces where many people have close contact. The spread of the virus can be reduced by ensuring that school facilities are cleaned regularly and effectively.

Environmental infection control should focus on regular cleaning for most surfaces. Target the use of disinfectants for surfaces that are touched frequently by hands. The routine application of disinfectants to housekeeping surfaces (e.g., floors, bookcases, tops of filing cabinets) is unnecessary. Use sanitizer wipes or cloths moistened with disinfectant to wipe electronic items (e.g., phones, computers, remote controls) that are touched often. Avoid the excessive use of disinfectant or sanitizer on electronic equipment.

Clean bathroom surfaces on a regular basis. Air sanitizer products have not been shown to disinfect airborne influenza virus or reduce disease transmission and are not recommended.

Good cleaning with soap or detergent in water will remove most microorganisms, as well as soil and organic matter that would otherwise reduce the effectiveness of subsequent disinfection. Where disinfectants are used, products should be registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) and labeled as effective against influenza virus on clean, hard non-porous surfaces. Follow label instructions carefully when using disinfectants and cleaners.

- [US EPA and NYS DEC Products Registered for Influenza - Sorted Alphabetically by Product Name \(PDF, 187KB, 38pg.\)](#)

- [US EPA and NYS DEC Products Registered for Influenza - Sorted by EPA Registration Number \(PDF, 178KB, 38pg.\)](#)

If registered disinfectants are not available, a chlorine bleach solution may be used - add about one tablespoon of bleach to a quart (4 cups) of water (smaller batches can be made from one teaspoon of bleach in a pint (2 cups) of water). Dispose of the used bleach solution when it becomes dirty or at least daily. Mix a fresh solution when repeating the cleaning process. Only mix bleach solutions in small batches.

Many surface disinfectants require the treated surface to remain wet for several minutes to be effective. Take note of any hazard advisories and indications for using personal protective items (such as household gloves). **Do not mix disinfectants and cleaners unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in serious injury or death.**

5. Early treatment for persons at high risk

It is important to continue to educate staff, parents and students on factors that may put students and staff at higher risk for complications of the H1N1 flu infection. People at high risk for complications from the flu who become sick with ILI should talk with their health care provider as soon as possible. Schools should encourage ill staff and parents of ill students at high risk of complications from the flu to seek early treatment. Consideration of early treatment with prescription antiviral medications, by a health care provider, is essential for people at high risk because such treatment may prevent hospitalization or death. Persons at high risk who have had close contact with people with ILI should contact their health care provider to discuss whether they may need to take prescription influenza antiviral medications.

The same age and risk groups who are at higher risk for seasonal flu complications should also be considered at higher risk for H1N1 flu infection complications. High-risk populations include:

- Children younger than 5 years old. (The risk for severe complications from seasonal flu is highest among children younger than 2 years old.)
- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Persons with the following conditions:
 - Chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological (including sickle cell disease), neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus);
 - Immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV;
 - Pregnant women;
 - Persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy;
 - Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

For more information on antiviral medications, see

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/questions_and_answers.htm

6. Consideration of selective school dismissal

Selective school dismissals may be considered based on the population of an individual school, such as those serving medically fragile or pregnant students. Decisions to dismiss such schools should be made by the school administrator in conjunction with their medical director and the county department of health to better protect these high-risk students and staff. While there are few schools where all or most students are at high risk, schools should balance the risks of keeping the students in school with the social and educational disruption that school dismissal can cause. School officials should work closely and directly with their local and State public health officials when deciding to selectively dismiss a school. Selective school dismissals are not likely to have a significant effect on community-wide transmission.

Additional Responses if the Severity of Flu Increases

NYSDOH will continue to assess the severity of illness caused by 2009 H1N1 flu and disseminate the results of these ongoing assessments. If global or national risk assessments by the World Health Organization or CDC indicate an increased level of severity compared with the spring 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak, NYSDOH and NYSED, in collaboration with CDC, local health departments and school districts, will consider the need to recommend additional strategies. These may include recommending that local authorities consider additional non-pharmaceutical interventions such as school dismissals and limiting large gatherings.

The NYSDOH, in collaboration with CDC, will continue to monitor the spread and severity of influenza illness and assist local health and education agencies to implement measures to mitigate the spread of flu. NYSED and NYSDOH will continue to collaborate to disseminate new guidance, collaboratively monitor school dismissals and other related issues. State and local public health and education agencies will work together to decide which strategies to implement and when, collect and share data, and disseminate emerging guidance.

Schools should review and update their current all-hazard emergency or pandemic plans and procedures. This should include updating contact information and communicating with vendors who supply critical products or services to plan for continuation of those services throughout the flu season. Critical services may include food service and hygiene supplies. This planning is especially important since suppliers could also be affected by the flu outbreak.

Schools are encouraged to communicate with families and the school community about what they can do to decrease spreading influenza illness; and help families and communities understand the important roles they can play in reducing the spread of influenza and keeping schools open. Finally, students, staff, and their families must take personal responsibility for staying home when ill, practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and planning for childcare in the event of a school dismissal.

Tools for Schools

The NYSDOH Novel H1N1 Flu Telephone Hotline: 1-800-808-1987
(New York City residents call 311)

The NYSDOH will provide updated guidance as additional information and CDC recommendations become available. Frequently updated information is posted on the NYSDOH website at http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/information_for_schools.htm

Frequently updated information is available on the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm or www.flu.gov.

The New York State Education Department provides guidance, support, and direction to administrators, faculty, staff, and the school community. A compilation of all H1N1 information provided by NYSDOH and NYSED is posted at <http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>

The New York Statewide School Health Service Center provides guidance and support to school health professionals. Frequently updated information is posted at <http://www.schoolhealthservices.org/>.

Links and contact information for your local (county) health department is available at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/lhu/map.htm>

English and Spanish educational materials are available below and include:

- [Influenza \(H1N1 and Seasonal\) Educational Materials Order Form](#)
- [Got the flu? Here's what to do: Ask for a mask! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¿Tiene la gripe? Sepa lo que debe hacer: pida una mascara \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep Your Germs to Yourself! \(pocket card\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Quédese con sus microbios: No salga de su casa y evite el contacto directo con los demás \(folleto\)](#)
- [Stop! Do you have Fever? Cough? Trouble breathing? Please tell the staff immediately! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Alto - Aviso Importante Para Todos Los Pacientes Tiene Usted - Fiebre? Tos? Problemas? Para Respirar? \(cartel\)](#)
- [Visitors are welcome ... but the flu is NOT! \(poster\)](#)

- Spanish – [Las visitas son bienvenidas ...La gripe NO! \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep your Germs to Yourself! \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¡Quédese con sus Microbios! \(cartel\)](#)
- [What to do? - When someone at home has the flu \(brochure\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¿Qué se debe hacer? cuando alguien en la casa tiene gripe \(folleto\)](#)
- [Keep our School Healthy \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [¡De usted depende parar la gripe! \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep our School Healthy \(poster\)](#)
 - Spanish – [Mantengamos la escuela sana \(cartel\)](#)
- [Keep Your Germs to Yourself - Stay Home and avoid close contact with others \(poster\)](#)

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.

8. **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).

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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.

Some things to know about the flu

During the spring of 2009 a new flu virus started making people sick in the United States and throughout the world. At first this illness was called “swine flu,” but now you may hear it called H1N1 flu. To date, most people effected with the H1N1 flu virus have experienced mild to moderate illness, similar to seasonal flu. However, the flu can be serious, and many more people may get the flu this school year.

What can you do?

- Get the seasonal flu vaccine now. It won't protect you from H1N1 flu, but seasonal flu is also circulating and can make you just as sick.
- Get the H1N1 flu vaccine as soon as it is available, according to the priority groups established by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Everyone should eventually be able to get the H1N1 flu vaccine, but those at highest priority are:
 - Pregnant women
 - Health care workers and emergency medical responders
 - People caring for infants under 6 months of age
 - Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years
 - People aged 25 to 64 years with underlying medical conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes)
- Sick kids should stay home! They should NOT go to school, work, or out in public. If you think you have the flu, you should stay home and away from others. Individuals with flu-like symptoms should remain home for at least 24 hours after fever has disappeared (without the use of fever-reducing medication).
- Practice healthy habits. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze with a tissue – not your hand. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Wash hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Wash and rub hands for 20 seconds – as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

Flu in our school

We expect that some people in our school will get the flu. Treatment for the H1N1 flu is the same as for seasonal flu. Rest, fluids and medicine to reduce body aches and fever, are all that most of us need to recover. For people with certain underlying medical conditions, such as those with asthma and other chronic diseases, flu can be more serious, and these individuals should contact their health care provider.

About school closures

The H1N1 flu outbreak that first occurred in the spring of 2009 taught us that closing schools does not reduce the spread of the H1N1 flu. This flu moves too fast. That's why federal, state and local officials no longer recommend school closures due to the flu except in special circumstances. For example, some schools might close because of high student, faculty or staff absenteeism. Your family should plan what they will do if school is closed for a time.

More information about the flu is available at www.nyhealth.gov and www.flu.gov.

This information is brought to you by the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Education Department, and your local school.