



**NASSAU COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Nassau County Department of Health (NCDOH), New York State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been monitoring the novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) Virus. As a result of these efforts, updated guidance for schools has recently been issued by the New York State Departments of Education and Health<sup>1</sup> and the CDC<sup>2</sup>. Below please find information from these documents to help you and your family be informed regarding flu.

While the NYS guidance has been tailored to reflect our local issues, the recommendations are consistent with those provided by the CDC and are based on the expectation that virus activity this season will be similar to that observed during the spring and summer. If the severity changes, the NCDOH will advise school districts regarding additional recommendations issued to protect the health and safety of the community. In an effort to monitor and assist with the situation in the schools, the NCDOH will restart weekly conference calls with school representatives. These conference calls will begin the week of September 14, 2009.

Groups of people who may be at higher risk for severe illness from H1N1 and seasonal flu include:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5 yrs of age
- Persons aged 65 or older
- Adults and children who have underlying conditions (see guidance documents)

Schools and parents can help keep influenza from spreading by following these recommendations, which are also highlighted in the enclosed CDC pamphlet:

Stay home when sick: Students or staff with Influenza Like Illness (ILI) [fever (temperature of 100°F or greater) and a cough and/or a sore throat in the absence of a known cause other than influenza] should stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. Ill students should not attend alternative childcare or congregate in settings outside of school such as extracurricular sports or clubs, libraries, or shopping malls. Longer times out of school may be appropriate for some situations.

Separate ill students and staff: 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, a 6-foot distance between ill persons should be maintained to minimize the spread of illness. School staff may

<sup>1</sup> ([http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/docs/2009-2010\\_k-12\\_school\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/docs/2009-2010_k-12_school_guidance.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/schoolguidance.htm>

offer a surgical mask in order to minimize spread of illness to those who present ILI if isolation is not available.

Hand Hygiene: Students and staff should frequently 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. Hand washing should be performed before and after meals, after recess or physical education, after using the toilet and at other appropriate times.

Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette: The influenza 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. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way. Hand hygiene should always be performed after handling dirty tissues or other soiled material.

Routine cleaning: 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 facilities are cleaned regularly and effectively by focusing on regular cleaning of most surfaces. The routine application of disinfectants to housekeeping surfaces (e.g., floors, bookcases, tops of filing cabinets) is unnecessary.

Get vaccinated against influenza: While there is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus, one is currently in production. **NCDOH will advise districts once novel H1N1 vaccine is approved and available to the public.** As always, vaccine against seasonal influenza is available and can be obtained by visiting your family doctor or facilities distributing the seasonal vaccine.

Taking care of a sick person at home: People with novel H1N1 influenza or seasonal flu who are cared for at home should check with their health care provider about any special care they may need. They should also ask about the need for antiviral medications and about emergency warning signs that might indicate the need to seek immediate medical attention. In addition to the general preventive measures discussed above, ill individuals should get plenty of rest, drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, and electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

Individuals who have additional questions should contact their health care provider. I look forward to continuing to work closely with our schools and parents to protect the health and safety of all students and staff.

Sincerely,



Maria Torroella Carney, MD, FACP  
Commissioner  
Nassau County Department of Health

