

## 2009-2010 School Influenza Guidance

**The new guidance applies to any flu virus circulating during the 2009-2010 school year, not only 2009 H1N1 flu.**

Schools should take the following steps to help keep students and staff from getting sick with flu. These steps should be followed at all times, and not only during a flu pandemic.

In the current flu conditions, students and staff with symptoms of flu should stay home for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not feel feverish, 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. Because high temperatures are linked with higher amounts of virus, people with a fever may be more contagious.

Other recommendations to help stop the spread of influenza:

- Encourage respiratory etiquette by providing staff and students
  - education and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes, and
  - easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Remind staff and students to practice good hand hygiene and provide the time and supplies for students and staff to wash their hands when needed.
- Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended. Some states and localities have laws about specific cleaning products used in schools. School officials should contact their state health department and department of environmental protection for additional guidance.
- Move students and staff who become sick at school to a separate room until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.
- Encourage sick students and staff at higher risk of complications from flu to get a medical evaluation as soon as possible.

**What can a school do to prepare for flu response during the 2009-2010 school year?**

- Review and revise existing pandemic plans and focus on protecting high risk students and staff.
- Update student and staff contact information as well as emergency contact lists.
- Identify and establish a point of contact with the local public health agency.
- Develop a plan to cover key positions, such as the school nurse, when staff stay home because they are sick.

- Set up a separate room (a sick room) for care of sick students or staff until they can be sent home.
- Purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks for nurses and other staff providing care for sick people at school. Provide training for this staff about basic infection control and the use of PPE.
- Develop an education campaign to encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Develop communication tools (e.g., letters to parents) that can be used to send sick students home, dismiss students, help families identify students who are at high-risk of complications from flu, help staff members self-identify who is at high risk of complications from flu, or cancel mass gatherings. Remind parents and staff how long sick students and staff should remain at home.
- Identify ways to increase social distance (the space between people).
- Review school policies and awards to encourage social distancing and avoiding any incentives for people or staff to go to school when they are sick (e.g., cancel perfect attendance awards).
- Develop a school dismissal plan and options for how school work can be continued at home (e.g., homework packets, web-based lessons, phone calls), if school is dismissed or students are sent home when sick. Communicate this plan to all community members who would be affected.
- Collaborate with the local health department, community organizations, local businesses, and social services on a plan for response.
- Help families and communities understand the important roles they can play in reducing the spread of flu in schools.

The decision to dismiss students will be made at the community level. School officials should work closely with their local and state public health and government officials to make sound decisions, based on local conditions. The decision should consider:

- the number and severity of cases in an outbreak (looking at national, regional, and local data),
- the risks of flu spread and benefits of dismissal,
- the problems that school dismissal can cause for families and communities, and
- different types of dismissal (selective, reactive, and preemptive).

CDC may recommend preemptive dismissals based on information that the outbreak is becoming **more severe**. An increase in flu spread without an impact on disease outcomes will not lead to the use of preemptive dismissals in most cases.