

Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the H1N1 Flu this School Year

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

1 Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

2 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.

3 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 children and teens at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

4 Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

If flu conditions become **MORE** severe, parents should consider the following steps:

Extend the time sick children stay home for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.

If a child is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever, cough, sore throat, and body aches.

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 a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.

Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare 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.

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.

What Schools Should Do H1N1 Flu

Update contact lists of faculty and staff and educate everyone about the school's plans to deal with an H1N1 seasonal epidemic.

Consider ways to promote good hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces that are frequently touched (door-knobs, tables, keyboards, etc.)

Develop response and communications plans to ensure that students and staff with fever, body aches, and cough stay at home and do not come to school until 24 hours past resolution of fever (without the use of fever-lowering medications). Advise parents of these plans.

Begin interacting with your local county health department about influenza response planning if you haven't already done so. Share absenteeism data with them and seek guidance about increasing monitoring for illness within the school.

Determine which school personnel will be actively screening children at the beginning of the day for signs of flu-like illness.

Consider alternative ways that instruction could be continued should the school need to be temporarily closed, e.g. pick up and delivery of homework assignments by bus drivers, internet-based lectures, use of local cable TV station, etc.

Consider alternative ways for delivery of school meals to at-risk children.

Consider ways for children to be vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.