

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and public health officials nationwide are investigating influenza A H1N1 (swine influenza) in the United States. Cases of influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) are confirmed by the OSDH. Case investigations begin immediately to institute control measures in order to limit spread to close contacts in the community, including group settings such as schools. During case investigations, the local county health department will work with school officials to identify exposed close contacts and institute control measures to prevent further spread.

The purpose of this document is to summarize guidelines for the recognition of children or school officials with symptoms of influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) and recommendations to reduce the spread of influenza in schools.

What should schools do to identify illnesses potentially due to influenza A H1N1 in a child and reduce spread to others?

1. School officials should be aware of the symptoms of influenza A H1N1. The symptoms of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of other seasonal influenza strains and include fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}$ F or 37.8° C), cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. In addition to these influenza-like illness symptoms, some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting.
2. Identify a location for a sick room. The room should be away from common rooms or areas which the students frequent.
3. Designate a limited number of staff to care for ill persons until they can be sent home. Designated staff should not be at increased risk of influenza (i.e., pregnant individuals) and staff should use appropriate personal protective equipment (i.e., masks and gloves).
4. Teachers and other school officials should be alert for symptoms of influenza-like illness among schoolchildren and follow established school policies for reporting children with symptoms of illness to the school nurse or other appropriate school official and exclude children with symptoms of illness from class while additional information is gathered.
5. If a child is experiencing a fever and additional symptoms of a respiratory illness such as a cough or sore throat, the school nurse or designated school official should contact a parent (or legal guardian) of the child and inform them the child should be sent home from school to prevent spread to other individuals. The child should be isolated from other individuals until the parent can make arrangements to send the child home.
6. School officials should speak with the parent (or legal guardian) to inform them the child is to be excluded from school and school activities (sports activities, clubs, dances, etc.) until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved and they are free of fever, or signs of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, even if taking antiviral medication.
7. If influenza A H1N1 (swine influenza) is suspected, contact your local county health department for further guidance on control measures.

What should be done to prevent or reduce the spread of influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) in schools?

- * **Stay home when ill.** Any employee, student, teacher, or staff reporting fever and respiratory symptoms should stay at home or be sent home until 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- * **Wash hands often.** Wash hands several times a day using soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds (about the time it takes to sing the ABC song). Dry hands with paper towels or automatic hand dryers if possible. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and paper towels are always available.
- * **Throw away tissues.** Influenza can be spread from coughs and sneezes. Make sure tissues are available in all classrooms. Students and staff should cover their mouths and nose with their upper arm or a tissue when coughing and sneezing. Tissues should be thrown away immediately followed by proper hand hygiene.

- * **Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.** Alcohol-based hand gels may be used in classrooms to minimize disruption. Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is effective in killing germs on hands when they are not visibly soiled. Appropriate times to use hand sanitizer are after coughing, sneezing, or contact with infected surfaces (e.g., desk, doorknob).
- * **Avoid close contact.** Schools should be extra-vigilant that ill students be excluded from sports activities, choir or any activities that may involve close contact, since transmission of the virus may be easier in these situations.
- * **Clean surfaces frequently.** In the school, clean commonly used surfaces such as door handles, handrails, eating surfaces, desks, etc., frequently with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants that are normally used in the school setting. These products should be used according to directions on the product label. For bleach solutions, mix 1/4 cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water. These solutions should be changed daily. Additional, extensive cleaning of school settings by wiping down floors and walls is not necessary as it is unknown whether this would be helpful in decreasing the spread of influenza.
- * **Don't forget about the school bus.** If possible, disinfect commonly handled interior surfaces (i.e., door handles, hand rails, etc.) between groups of students. Consider making tissues and alcohol-based hand gel available on buses since hand washing facilities are not available.
- * **Report high absentee rates to your local health department.** Schools with high absentee rates on a given day due to illness should report this to their local county health department.

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