

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR H1N1
FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES
(CDC RECOMMENDATIONS)

Action Steps for Parents/Families to Protect Your Child and Family from the Influenza 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 influenza 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 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 students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
- 4. Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza when vaccines are available.

If influenza 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 household member 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 and other symptoms of the influenza.

Follow these steps to prepare for influenza 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 the influenza.
- Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the influenza and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the influenza season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the influenza 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.

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

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

Keep children at high risk for influenza complications from getting sick with influenza

Make sure your child's hands are washed for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.

Have your child **cough and sneeze into a tissue** or into his or her elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available.

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 an influenza in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of influenza, **people who are at risk of complications from influenza should consider staying away from public gatherings.**

If influenza is severe in your community, 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 influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccines when 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 influenza or unusual behavior, which may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit. If you are not able to measure a temperature your child might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Fever-reducing medications may be given. Fever-reducing medications are medicines that contain acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Motrin). These medicines can be given to people who are sick with influenza to help bring their fever down and relieve their pain. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) should not be given to children or teenagers who have influenza; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

A sick student can return to school after 24 hours have passed with a normal temperature (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) without the use of fever-reducing medications. 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.

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

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough liquids
- 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
- Influenza-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 influenza

- **Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat influenza 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** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants such as 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 influenza; 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, visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about influenza. For more information about influenza in your community, visit www.kingscountyoem.com or www.countyofkings.com/Health/index.html.