

# What Parents Need to Know About H1N1 (Swine Influenza) to Protect Their Children

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Over the summer your local health department has been watching the H1N1 flu (formerly known as swine flu) and planning steps for this fall. We know that so far, school aged children have been affected by the H1N1 flu at a higher rate than other age groups and that children are known to be highly likely to spread the flu especially in group settings like school.

Your school system has been working with the local health department on measures to help limit the spread of flu this school year but there are important things that parents and students can do as well.

There are still many unknowns as we plan for this fall and what the next flu season may bring but by being well informed and by taking some simple action steps we can all help protect the health of our children and our community.

If you would like more information on H1N1 flu, please feel free to go to the CDC (Center for Disease Control) website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), call the CDC hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO or call your local health department.

## What Can I Do To Prevent The Spread of H1N1 Flu?

The role of students and parents is a very important one. Take a common sense approach to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit and *teach these habits to your children:*

-Washing and drying your hands properly is one of the best ways of protecting yourself against the spread of germs. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Teach your children to sing Happy Birthday twice while washing hands to ensure they are washing long enough. You can use an alcohol based rub if soap and water is unavailable.

-Wash and dry hands frequently but especially before handling or eating food, after coughing or sneezing, blowing your nose or using the bathroom.

-Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose of the used tissue in a covered, lined wastebasket right away. Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you do not have a tissue rather than sneezing into the air or into your hand. Wash your hands.

-Try to stay several feet away from sick people to avoid catching their germs.

-Monitor your school aged children for illness every morning. Keep your child home if he/she is sick. If your child is suspected of having H1N1 flu they should remain home until he/she has been symptom-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication to prevent the spread of flu to others.

-Students who are sick should not be sent to group day care and should not be out in public places except to receive medical care. Ill students should not be at the mall, at sporting or social events, in restaurants etc. while they are out sick from school.

-Plan for how you will care for your child if he or she is home sick. Stay informed. Get fast reliable information on H1N1 and seasonal flu developments at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or by calling your local health department.

## Influenza Vaccine: What about a vaccine?

The United States Government is working closely with vaccine manufacturers to provide a safe, plentiful vaccine supply. Vaccine production is a multi step process but it is expected that vaccine for H1N1 flu will be available this fall. Because of this multi-step process however, vaccine may not be available all at once.

Due to this fact high risk target groups have been identified by the CDC and its health care experts and vaccination will focus on these groups for vaccination first. Currently, these target groups include children and young adults 6 mos. to 24 years of age. We know that so far this age group has been affected by the H1N1 influenza virus at a higher rate than other age groups. It is important to remember that as the next few months progress recommendations from the CDC *could change* based on flu activity and severity. Your local health department will work with your school to keep you informed on when and where vaccine will be available.

It is also important to note that a vaccine for regular seasonal flu will also be available this fall as usual. Seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccine are two *separate* vaccines and both are very important. The CDC recommends all children between the ages of 6 mos. and 18 years receive a seasonal flu vaccine annually. These vaccines should be available as early as September or October and you can schedule your child for a vaccine by calling your doctor or the local health department.

## Will Schools Be Closing Due to the H1N1 Flu?

The guidelines provided by the CDC currently do not suggest closing the schools due to this type of influenza. The current recommendations are to keep those ill students and faculty members at home to prevent further spread. The local health department will communicate with the schools as to how long the student or faculty member should be at home. If schools were to close, it would be a joint decision by the local health department and school district.

### What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include:

- Fever (over 100° F)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches, headache, runny or stuffy nose, chills and fatigue.

A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

### Get Informed

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical. You can call the Ohio Department of Health Swine Flu (H1N1) Information Line at 1-866-800-1404 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can also find information on swine flu (H1N1) at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov> and click on the swine flu (H1N1) link.

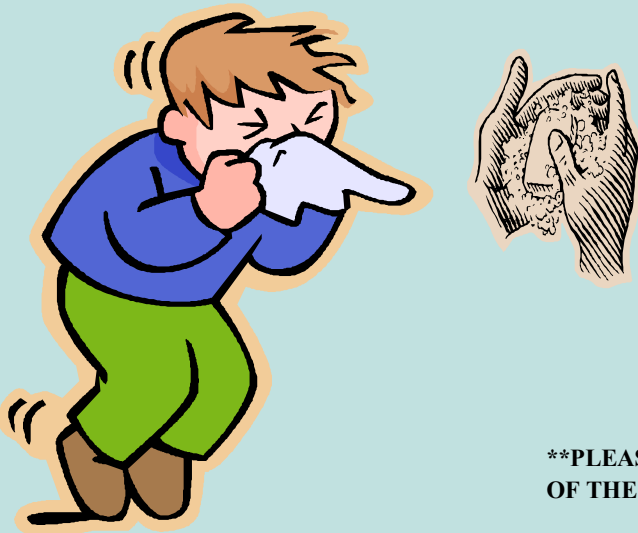
Reliable, accurate and timely information is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) and [www.ohiopandemicflu.gov](http://www.ohiopandemicflu.gov). These websites have a large amount of information to help individuals as well as churches, schools and businesses prepare.

Another source of information on swine influenza (H1N1) is the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-6348) and by visiting the website at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>

Talk to your local health care provider and public health officials.

For more information during an actual pandemic or other public health emergency, it will be important to listen to local radio or cable stations and check the health department websites.

<http://www.senecahealthdept.org>



### What should I do if my child becomes sick with flu like symptoms?

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu in humans can range in severity from mild to severe. If your child becomes ill here are a few things to remember:

- Check with his/her health care provider about any special care they might need if he/she has a health condition such as diabetes, asthma, or other chronic health condition
- Check with his/her health care provider about whether your child should take antiviral medications
- The child should stay home until he/she has been symptom-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication except to seek medical care or for other necessities
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest
- Have your child drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands
- Avoid close contact with others do not go to school or other public places while ill

**Warning!** Do *not* give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have the flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome

Children 5 years of age and older and teenagers with the flu can take medicines *without* aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®), to relieve symptoms.

\*Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention.



### When to Seek Emergency Medical Care

Get medical care right away if the sick person at home:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- Has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

**\*\*PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT DUE TO THE EVER-EVOLVING NATURE OF THE SITUATION, INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE\*\***