

**GENERAL INFORMATION FOR H1N1**  
**FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ALL OTHER STAFF**  
**(CDC RECOMMENDATIONS)**

**Action Steps for Teachers and Staff to Prevent the Spread of Influenza**

**Take the following steps ALL the time and not only during an influenza pandemic to help keep your students and yourself from getting sick with influenza.**

- **Educate and encourage students to cover their mouth and nose** with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.
- **Remind students to practice good hand hygiene** and provide the time and supplies (easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners) for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.
- **Be a good role model** by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- **Keep an eye out for sick students and send them to the school health office for further evaluation.** Sick people should stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- **Clean surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are used in these areas.
- **Teachers should also stay home when sick.** Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- **If you are pregnant, have asthma, diabetes or other conditions that put you at a higher risk for complications from influenza,** you should speak with your doctor as soon as possible if you develop symptoms of influenza-like illness. People at high risk of influenza complications who develop influenza, can benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.
- **If you have children,** plan ahead for child care if your child gets sick or his or her school is dismissed.

**If your health department says that influenza conditions have become more severe**

- **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 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 (if known). Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of influenza.

**Q. Which students and staff are at higher risk for complications from influenza?**

Anyone can get influenza (even healthy people), and serious problems from influenza can happen at any age. However, children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as pulmonary disease, including asthma, diabetes, neuromuscular disorders or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older, are more likely to get complications from influenza.

**Q. What can school personnel, students and families do to keep from getting sick and spreading influenza?**

Families, students and school staff can keep from getting sick with influenza in three ways:

- Practicing good hand hygiene. Students and staff members should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Practicing respiratory etiquette. The main way that the influenza spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, so it is important to 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.
- Staying home if you're sick. Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

Students, staff and their families must take personal responsibility for helping to slow the spread of the virus by practicing these steps to keep from getting sick with influenza and protecting others from getting influenza.

**Q. What is the best way to practice good hand hygiene?**

- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice) is the best way to keep your hands from spreading the virus.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners containing at least 60% alcohol are also effective.
- If soap and water are not available and alcohol-based products are not allowed in the school, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful for cleaning hands. However, they may not be as effective as alcohol-based sanitizers.

**Q. What steps can schools take to keep students and staff from getting sick?**

Schools should take the following steps to help keep students and staff from getting sick with influenza. These steps should be followed ALL the time, and not only during an influenza pandemic.

- 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.
- Send sick students and staff home. Advise students, staff, and families that sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (those containing ibuprofen or acetaminophen such as Tylenol or Motrin).

**Q. How do I recognize a fever or signs of a fever?**

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, the sick person might have a fever if he or she

- Feels warm
- Has a flushed appearance, or
- Is sweating or shivering

**Q. Should family members of sick students stay home too?**

Not unless the influenza conditions are determined to be more severe. It is possible that family members could already be sick with influenza and not be showing symptoms yet. Parents should continue to monitor their health and the health of the sick child, as well as the health of their other children.

**Q. What can a school do to prepare for influenza 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 stays home because they are sick.
- Set up a separate area for care of sick students or staff until they can be sent home.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout.
- Purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks for nurses and other staff providing care for sick people at school and those that are sick. 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 influenza, 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, cable TV, etc.), if school is dismissed or students are sent home 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 influenza in schools.

**Q. What should I do if I'm pregnant and I work at/or attend K-12 school?**

Pregnant women working in or attending schools should follow the same guidance as the general public about staying home when sick, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and routine cleaning. Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from influenza and should speak with their doctor as soon as possible if they develop an influenza-like illness to find out whether they should take antiviral influenza medicines. Any person at high risk for influenza complications should do the same. Early treatment with antiviral influenza medicines is recommended for pregnant women who have influenza. Pregnant women and their doctors should know that they are part of the first priority group to receive the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine.

**Q. Can the virus live on surfaces, such as computer keyboards?**

- Yes, influenza viruses may be spread when a person touches droplets left by coughs and sneezes on hard surfaces (such as desks or door knobs) or objects (such as keyboards or pens) and then touches his or her mouth or nose. However, it is not necessary to disinfect these surfaces beyond routine cleaning.
- Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. 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.