



## County of Sonoma DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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## **Guidelines for Schools regarding H1N1 (Swine) Flu – Updated May 5, 2009**

New information on disease severity warrant revision of the school closure guidance. Most U.S. cases have not been severe and are comparable in severity to seasonal influenza. CDC and local and state health officials will continue to closely monitor the severity and spread of this novel H1N1 influenza outbreak.

At this time, Sonoma County Public Health recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill, and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. Decisions about school dismissal will be at the discretion of Public Health, in discussion with school officials, based on local disease impact including public concern and the impact of school absenteeism and staffing shortages.

### **Recommendations**

- School dismissal is not advised for a suspected or confirmed case of novel influenza H1N1 and, in general, is not advised unless there is a magnitude of faculty or student absenteeism that interferes with the school's ability to function.
- Students, faculty or staff with influenza-like illness (fever > 100° with a cough or sore throat) should stay home and not attend school or any school events for at least 7 days, except to seek medical care, even if symptoms resolve sooner.
- Students, faculty and staff who are still sick 7 days after they become ill should continue to stay home from school until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- Students, faculty and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the school day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home. If possible, the individual can be asked to wear a mask (an inexpensive surgical mask is adequate, an N95 respirator mask is not necessary). This will help reduce the spread of the illness to others.
- Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children, and faculty and staff should self-monitor every morning for symptoms of influenza-like illness.
- Ill students should not attend alternative child care or congregate in settings other than school.
- School administrators should communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain guidance about reporting of influenza-like illnesses in the school.
- Schools can help serve as a focus for educational activities aimed at promoting ways to reduce the spread of influenza, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Students, faculty and staff should stringently follow sanitary measures to reduce the spread of influenza, including covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or coughing or sneezing into their sleeve if a tissue isn't available), frequently washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap and water is not possible.

## **Cleaning the school/childcare environment -**

- Clean frequently touched surfaces, toys, and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled.
- Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Always follow label instructions when using any EPA-registered disinfectant. If EPA-registered chlorine bleach is not available and a generic (i.e., store brand) chlorine bleach is used, mix ¼ cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water.
- Keep disinfectants out of the reach of children.

### **Further guidance can be found at:**

Sonoma County Public Health Website at: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/publichealth>

Questions and Answers About Novel H1N1 Flu at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>

What to Do If You Get Flu-Like Symptoms at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>

Interim Guidance for H1N1 Flu: Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home at:

[http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm)