



H1N1 INFLUENZA ALERT TO PUBLIC & PRIVATE SCHOOLS

DATE: August 11, 2009
RE: Novel H1N1 Influenza in School Settings

A few months ago, we ended the school year with the Novel H1N1 virus being detected in our community. The virus has continued to be detected throughout the summer months and we can anticipate it continuing to spread as the school year begins. So far, the disease has been mild and no deaths have occurred in Collin County.

Please note that new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that **schools should only close if a school is not able to conduct its day-to-day functions or if the H1N1 virus develops into a more deadly form.** By following the CDC’s recommendations listed below, you can keep students, staff members, and families healthy.

Under conditions with similar severity as in spring 2009—

- **Stay home when sick:** Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. DO NOT USE aspirin or products that contain aspirin (e.g. bismuth subsalicylate-Pepto Bismol) for children 18 years and younger who are confirmed or suspected to have H1N1 influenza
- **Separate ill students and staff:** Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and that those who care for ill students and staff wear protective gear such as a mask.
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:** The new recommendations emphasize the importance of the basic foundations of influenza prevention: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).
- **Routine cleaning:** School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary.
- **Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths. People at high risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases.
- **Consideration of selective school dismissal:** Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk (for example, schools for medically fragile children or for pregnant students) a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk students.

For more resources from the CDC related to schools, please visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools and click on the “Preparing for Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Schools (K-12)”, and “Guidance for State and Local Health Officials and School Administrators for School Responses during 2009-2010 School Year” links. You may also visit www.TexasFlu.org for information provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Candy Blair, RN
Director, CCHCS

Kelley Stone
Director, Homeland Security

Muriel Marshall, DO, DrPH
Collin County Health Authority