

School Influenza FAQ

I heard that some students at my child's school have H1N1 influenza. Should I keep my child home from school as a precaution?

No. Parents do not need to keep otherwise healthy children home from school unless directed to do so by local school and health officials.

How do school and health officials decide to close a school?

In accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, school closing decisions would be based on faculty and student absenteeism levels that interfere with the school's ability to function.

I know of students, faculty or staff from a school who are sick—should the school close?

School closings because of a flu outbreak are decided by the school district and state officials. Their decisions are based on evidence regarding the severity of illness from the influenza virus, the amount of school absenteeism, and if staffing shortages could affect school operations. Closing schools has not been an effective public health measure to prevent spread of influenza in the community. School closure is not advised unless a large number of faculty or students are absent, and their absence interferes with the school's ability to function.

Does closing schools help prevent the spread of 2009 Influenza A H1N1?

Because of the large number of reported 2009 Influenza A H1N1 cases and disease clusters in the U.S., the spread of 2009 Influenza A H1N1 within communities makes individual school and child care program closure ineffective as a control measure. Some schools may temporarily be closed due to high rates of absenteeism and influenza-like illness (ILI) that interfere with the school's ability to function.

I heard that students (or staff) from a school have been diagnosed with swine flu. Will the school be officially notifying parents if swine flu is confirmed in the school?

Influenza virus is being spread throughout our community. Most individuals who become infected with influenza have mild illness and rapidly recover. Some individuals who become infected do not develop any symptoms. We can expect influenza to infect some children in all of our schools during the influenza season, so we do not plan to routinely notify parents if influenza is confirmed in a specific school.

What is the health department doing when they find out about cases of swine flu at a school?

The school district and health district are working together to recommend day-to-day, common sense measures that might reduce the risk of being infected with influenza virus. These measures include staying home when sick, covering your cough, and frequent hand washing. If

a school were to experience widespread illness, then the school district and health district would work together to monitor the cluster and see if any additional measure would be helpful.

What is the best way to prevent the spread of 2009 Influenza A H1N1 at schools that have confirmed cases?

The best way to reduce the spread of influenza in schools continues to be the early identification of ill students, faculty or staff, and having ill persons stay home from school until 24 hours after symptoms resolve and fever has ended (unaided by medication). School health offices are monitoring fevers and will recheck temperatures upon a student's return, to prevent students returning with fever. All students, faculty and staff should practice good respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette. See the next question and answer for information on respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette.

What is "good respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette"?

Good respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette means that people:

- Carefully cover their nose and mouth with a disposable tissue every time they cough or sneeze. If they do not have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their sleeves or upper arm.
- Dispose of used tissues immediately into a covered trash receptacle
- Perform hand hygiene (wash their hands with non-antimicrobial soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or antiseptic hand wash if hand washing is not possible) after contact with secretions from the nose and mouth and potentially contaminated objects or materials.

My child had contact with a student (or teacher) who has developed flu symptoms or who has been diagnosed with 2009 Influenza A H1N1. Should I be concerned? What should I do?

It is not possible to know if your child was exposed to 2009 Influenza A H1N1 or to determine how likely it is that your child will become sick. If your child is at high risk for complications of the flu (for example, is less than 5 years old; has asthma, heart or kidney disease or a weakened immune system), call your child's health care provider to see if prescription antiviral medication that may prevent 2009 Influenza A H1N1 (prophylaxis) is needed. If your child is not at high risk, monitor your child for influenza-like illness (ILI) and call your child's health care provider, who will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed. Keep your child at home if he/she becomes ill.

What is the best way to be sure people who have flu-like symptoms or 2009 Influenza A H1N1 do not go to school?

Parents and guardians should monitor their children every morning for fever and flu-like symptoms (fever of 100°F or greater, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue or possible diarrhea or vomiting). Faculty and staff should check themselves for fever and flu-like symptoms. Any persons with fever and/or flu-like symptoms should stay home until the symptoms have resolved and they have been fever free (without fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours.

What if someone comes to school and then begins to show flu-like symptoms?

Students, faculty and staff who become feverish or appear to have an influenza-like illness (ILI) when they come to school or who become ill during the school day will be separated from classroom(s). Their temperature will be taken and documented. Ill students, faculty or staff will be sent home in accordance with CCSD procedures.

How long should students, faculty or staff with flu-like symptoms or confirmed 2009 Influenza A H1N1 stay out of school?

Students, faculty or staff with fever and/or influenza-like illness (ILI) should stay home and not attend school or go into the community, except to seek medical care, until symptoms are over and at least 24 hours have passed since fever ended (with no fever-reducing medication).

If my child has a fever or shows flu-like symptoms or has been diagnosed with 2009 Influenza A H1N1, can he or she still attend day care or other afterschool activities?

No. Ill children should stay home. They should not attend alternative childcare, afterschool activities or other group activities until fever and /or other flu-like symptoms have resolved (without medication) for at least 24 hours.

Prevention

Is there a vaccine against 2009 Influenza A H1N1?

At this time, there is no vaccine for 2009 Influenza A H1N1. The seasonal influenza vaccine does not provide protection against 2009 Influenza A H1N1. This makes ordinary precautions, such as covering coughs and washing hands, all the more important. A new vaccine that is effective in preventing the 2009 Influenza A H1N1 is being made and should be available in Nevada in late October.

What can I do to protect myself and my children from getting sick?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these steps to protect your health:

- Avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with sick people as much as possible.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue if you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.