

# Preparing for the Flu

## (Including 2009 H1N1 Flu)

A Communication Toolkit for Schools (Grades K-12)



## Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- ▶ Be prepared to support home learning activities if the school makes them available. Your child's school may offer web-based lessons, instructional phone calls, and other types of distance learning. Have school materials, such as text books, workbooks, and homework packets available at home.
- ▶ Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- ▶ Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children dismissed from school. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.
- ▶ If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

### Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

- ▶ **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.
- ▶ **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- ▶ **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). 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.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting



- Not waking up or not interacting
  - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
  - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
  - Sudden dizziness
  - Confusion
  - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- ▶ **Check with your doctor about any special care** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.
  - ▶ **Have the sick household member wear a facemask** – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
  - ▶ **Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines** for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye’s syndrome
  - ▶ **Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

If your health department says that flu 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. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

### For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
  - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
  - TTY: (888) 232-6348
  - [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)

## Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
2. **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.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, parents should consider the following steps:

- ▶ **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 completely 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. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- ▶ Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- ▶ Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.

- ▶ Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- ▶ Update emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.
- ▶ Talk to your school administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

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## Action Steps for Parents of Children at High Risk for Flu Complications

Children with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic conditions, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, or who are pregnant are at higher risk of having complications from flu. In addition, all children younger than 5 years old are at higher risk of flu complications compared to older children. If you are not sure if any of your children are at higher risk for flu complications, please check with a doctor.

### Keep children at high risk for flu complications from getting sick with the flu

- ▶ **Make sure your child's hands are washed** for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ Have your child **cough and sneeze into a tissue** or into his or her elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available.
- ▶ **Keep your child away from people who are sick.**
- ▶ **Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches** with cleaning agents that are usually used.
- ▶ When there is flu in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of flu, **people who are at risk of complications from flu should consider staying away from public gatherings.**
- ▶ If flu is severe in your community, talk to your doctor and child's school to **develop a plan on how to handle your child's special needs.**
- ▶ **Get your child vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

### Recognize if your children are sick

Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can result in a delay in responding to their illness. It is important to watch carefully for the signs and symptoms of flu or unusual behavior that may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, your child might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- ▶ Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- ▶ Bluish or gray skin color
- ▶ Not drinking enough fluids

- ▶ Not urinating or no tears when crying
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Not waking up or not interacting
- ▶ Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- ▶ Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- ▶ Sudden dizziness
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Please share this information with your child's teacher or other caregivers, so they can tell you if they notice your child is not feeling well.

### Tips for taking care of high risk children with the flu

- ▶ **Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child at home** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor.
- ▶ **Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants, Pedialyte®) to keep from being dehydrated.
- ▶ **If your child has a fever, use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor recommends** based on your child's age. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.

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