

Dear Parents/Guardians:

In light of the fast approaching 2009-2010 school year and the recent media reports in regards to the pandemic outbreak of H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu), in the United States and internationally, we at Southern Columbia Area would like to take an opportunity to provide you with the most recent information in regards to the H1N1 illness. The Pennsylvania Department of Health is providing continuing guidance and recommendations to schools throughout the Commonwealth during the development of this situation.

What is H1N1 Flu?

H1N1 is a type of influenza (flu) virus that causes respiratory disease that can spread between people. Most people infected with this virus in the United States have had mild disease, but some have had more severe illness. Young children, pregnant women, and people with chronic diseases like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease may be at higher risk for complications from this infection. There are steps you can take to protect your family and to know when to seek medical care.

What are the symptoms?

In most children, the symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of regular flu. They include:

- Fever of over 100 degrees
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills and fatigue
- Occasionally, vomiting and diarrhea

How to keep from getting it:

Flu viruses spread from person to person mainly through the coughing or sneezing of a sick person. Flu virus may also be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with the virus and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Vaccine development to protect against H1N1 flu is currently ongoing testing, but there are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like H1N1 flu:

- Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Teach your children to cough and sneeze into a tissue or into the inside of their elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. Also, make sure the tissue is thrown in the trash after being used and hands are washed.
- Teach your children to stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- Children who are sick should stay home from school and daycare and stay away from other people until they are better.
- In communities where H1N1 flu has occurred, stay away from shopping malls, movie theaters, or other places where there are large groups of people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

What to do if your child is sick:

- Notify the school nurse if your child has the flu. Monitoring flu incidence will help keep students, faculty and our community healthy.
- Unless they need medical attention, keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school or daycare.
- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water, Pedialyte ®).
- Keep the sick child comfortable. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat, and muscle aches, you can use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor recommends based on your child's age. Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.

- If someone in your home is sick, keep him or her away from those who are not sick.
- Keep tissues close to the sick person and have a trash bag within reach for disposing used tissues.

The key to controlling the spread of respiratory infections is implementing and practicing good infection control. This information is provided to encourage your compliance with these preventative measures. Please refer to the following links for up to date information in regards to the illness. If you have any questions, please feel to contact your child's school nurse. Your child's health, wellness, and safety are of a paramount importance to us at Southern Columbia Area!

Pennsylvania Department of Health:

<http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?q=252990>

H1N1 Fact Sheet: <http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=171&q=253550>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

H1N1 Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home:

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm