

SWINE FLU (H1N1 FLU) INFORMATION FOR THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR

Definition of H1N1 (Swine) Influenza:

- Swine Flu is a viral infection of the nose, throat, windpipe, and bronchi. The main symptoms are a fever, cough, sore throat, and runny nose. If you don't have a fever, you don't have Swine Flu. Usually there's more muscle pain, headache, fever and chills than seen with the common cold. Some people are also experiencing nausea and diarrhea, but this is much less usual.

What is a Pandemic?

- The term "pandemic" refers to the number and distribution of cases around the world, not to the severity of the disease. That is, there are a lot of cases in many countries all over the world, but the cases are not necessarily all severe.
- Flu is caused by the H1N1 virus. It started in March 2009 and by June had spread to most of the world (a pandemic). After exposure (close contact), 20% of people come down with symptoms in 1 to 4 days. The complication rates in seasonal and Swine Flu are the same. It is anticipated that this fall / winter season, we will see more cases of Flu due to the emergence of Swine Flu. Some experts estimate that up to 30-50% of the U.S. population will get the Swine Flu.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of H1N1 Flu?

- Most cases of H1N1 Influenza in the USA at this time involve only mild illness. Your child may exhibit the following symptoms: fever (over 100 degrees F), feverishness, cough, sore throat, congestion or runny nose. Some additional symptoms may be experienced, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.
- Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.
- **Children with the above signs and symptoms should not be sent to school. Children at school with these signs and symptoms will be sent home.**

How do I Protect My Family and Myself from Getting This Flu?

- The virus is spread by sneezing, coughing, and hand contact.
 1. Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and discard the tissue in the trash immediately. If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow (into your sleeve) - do not cough into your hands. Set a good example for your children by following these practices yourself.
 2. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub often. Soap and water works very well - lather and rub hands for 15-20 seconds, or as long as it takes to sing the "happy birthday" song twice. Alcohol based hand sanitizers are a good alternative when soap and water are not immediately available.
 3. Clean frequently-touched surfaces often: faucets, doorknobs, telephones, the TV remote, computer keyboards, etc.
 4. Don't touch your face or eyes with your hands if you have not recently washed them.

- **Keep children out of school when sick. Your child may return to school after the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.** (CDC)
- Stay away from others if you are ill; if you are well, stay away from those who are ill.
- Swine Flu shots: When the Swine Flu vaccine becomes available, get all family members protected. Children need to be over 6 months old. The Swine Flu vaccine is anticipated to be available by mid October.
- A note on the seasonal flu shot: This year's seasonal flu shot does not protect against the Swine Flu. All children 6 months to 18 years of age are advised to get the seasonal flu shot. This means that to get protection for both the seasonal and Swine Flu, your children will need to get two different vaccinations.
- You should **NOT** see your doctor or go to the Emergency Room if your child has mild illness - stay at home! If you or your children do not have Swine Flu, they are likely to be exposed to it in the waiting room of a doctor's office or the Emergency Room.

Diagnosis: How to know that your child has Swine Flu

If Swine Flu becomes widespread in our community and your child has flu symptoms with a fever, then he or she likely has Swine Flu. You don't need to get any special tests. You don't need to call or see your child's doctor, unless your child is HIGH-RISK (see section below "What Care Does My Child Need?") or develops a possible complication of the flu (see the "Call your child's doctor" section).

What Care Does my Child Need?

The treatment of Swine Flu depends on your child's main symptoms. It's no different from treating symptoms of the common cold. So far, the rate of complications is no higher than with regular seasonal flu. Bed rest is not necessary. Antibiotics are not helpful.

- **Fever or aches** - Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever over 102°F (39°C) or for any pain. **Children and adolescents who have influenza should never take aspirin.**
- **Cough** - For children over age 6, give cough drops. If your child is over 1 year of age, give honey (1/2 to 1 teaspoon as needed). Never give honey to babies. If honey is not available, you can use corn syrup. Drugstore cough medicines are not as helpful as honey. Also, they are not approved for children under 4 years old (FDA).
- **Sore throat** - Tylenol or Ibuprofen is very helpful for throat pain. Children over 6 years old can suck on hard candy. Children over 1 year old can sip warm chicken broth or other warm liquids.
- **Stuffy or blocked nose** - Saline (or warm-water) nose drops followed by suction (or nose blowing) will open most blocked noses. Use these "nasal washes" whenever your child can't breathe through the nose. You can buy saline spray without a prescription. Saline nose drops can also be made by adding 1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) of table salt to 1 cup (8 oz or 240 ml) of warm water. Use 2 or 3 drops at a time.
- **Antiviral medicine (such as Tamiflu)** - Most LOW-RISK children with Swine Flu **do not need antiviral medicine** unless they develop serious symptoms (such as pneumonia). Antiviral medicines must be started within 48 hours of the start of flu symptoms to have an effect. They usually only reduce the time your child is sick by 1 or 2 days. They improve the symptoms but do not eliminate them.

- **HIGH-RISK children for complications** - The following children are at higher risk for complications from Swine Flu: lung disease (such as asthma), heart disease (such as a congenital heart disease), weak immune system (such as cancer), diabetes, sickle cell disease, kidney disease, diseases requiring long-term aspirin therapy, other chronic diseases, pregnant teens, or children less than 5 years old.
- **Expected Course** - The fever lasts 2 to 3 days, the runny or stuffy nose 1 to 2 weeks, and the cough 2 to 3 weeks.

When Does my Child Need to See the Doctor?

Call your child's doctor NOW (night or day) if:

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Breathing becomes difficult or fast
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Dehydration occurs (no urine in 12 hours, dry mouth, no tears)
- Not waking up or interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held

Call your child's doctor during the day if:

- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child is in the HIGH RISK group and has flu symptoms
- Earache or sinus pain occurs
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- Cough lasts more than 3 weeks
- Your child becomes worse

What About School Closures?

- School closures, which were recommended in the Spring of the 2009 school year, were *not helpful* in halting the spread of Swine Flu. The CDC, Federal and State governments are currently not recommending any routine school closures for Swine Flu during the fall / winter of this school season.
- Any decision to close our schools would result from collaboration between the school district and the county health department.
- In the unlikely event of school closings due to Swine Flu, you would be notified in the same ways that we announce school closings due to inclement weather. That is, via the local media (TV and radio stations), and our district's school closing info. phone line (735-3970). In addition, the district could notify families via "autodialed" phone calls to students' homes.
- It is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to consider options in advance of the unlikely event of a school closing. Arrange for child care in other than a group setting.

Where Can I Get More Information?

- Stay informed:
www.flu.gov
www.chemungcountyhealth.org
www.cdc.gov/h1n1/

- www.health.state.ny.us
Develop a plan: Individual / family / business:
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan>

Based (and modified for school use) on advice sheet by: Barton D. Schmitt MD, Denver, CO.
8-26-2009

Authors:

Kim Holden, RN, FNP - Nurse Practitioner - Elmira School District

Linda Swarthout, RN, BSN, MS - Chemung County Health Department

Kenneth A. Sobel, MD - School Physician - Elmira and Horseheads School Districts

9-8-2009