

May 4, 2009

Dear Pelham Parents:

Now that school is back in session I wanted to let you know what measures are being taken to provide as much protection from the H1N1 virus as possible. We also participated in a conference call with the Governor and the Commissioners of Education and Health & Human Services late yesterday afternoon; a follow-up conference call will take place at 3:30 this afternoon. The Governor's Office has issued the following information regarding the swine flu which you will find in the attachment. Again, the original guidelines and recommendations remain in effect with no new amendments. I do need to inform you, however, that NHHS has shifted its focus to a "community based" approach due the fact that the one confirmation and four "probables" in NH have little or no connection with foreign travel, and therefore, the concern is now with interactions in the general public. In fact, in your packets please note the statement, "...travel is not a determining indicator of the H1N1 virus." For further information please note the public inquiry line contained in your packet—1-888-330-6764.

"Hand Washing" remains a preeminent concern in terms of prevention and the Governor's Office would like us to reiterate that message to you. Again, if you still feel it would be more prudent to keep your child out of school, please feel free to do so. However, I did want you to know what our schools are doing in terms of preventative measures and precautions:

- All lockers, door-knobs, water coolers, locker rooms, bathrooms, cafeteria tables will continually be cleaned and sterilized by our custodial staff. In short, all surfaces that students come into contact with will be cleaned and sterilized.
- Any child who presents what seems like "flu like" symptoms will be examined in a special room not utilized by staff or students as an extra precaution, and may be sent home.
- Hand sanitizers and sanitizing wipes have been provided to every classroom.
- All buildings have had faculty and staff meetings at the start of the day to go over procedures and protocols.
- Teachers have been instructed to reiterate with all students in their classes good hygiene as well as the specific instructions provided by CDC/NHHS.
- Parents are encouraged to exercise good judgment as to whether their child should attend school or not, and again at no penalty to the child.

As more information becomes available, we will make certain to update parents and the community as quickly as possible. Lastly, let me say how much I appreciate your patience and understanding during this very difficult time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Frank Bass
Superintendent

Facts About Swine Flu (H1N1 flu)

Did you know?

- Swine flu (H1N1 flu) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses.
- The Swine flu spreads the same way the regular flu spreads. People with the flu pass it to others by coughing and sneezing.
- Swine flu can cause fever, runny nose, being tired, sore throat, and coughing.
- Swine flu is not spread by eating pork. This flu has not been found in pigs in the United States.
- Most of the time the Swine flu sickens people for a short time period. But like the regular flu, some people have gotten very sick and a small number have died from Swine flu.
- There are medicines that can treat Swine flu.



How can you stay healthy and keep from getting the Swine flu?



- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Try not to touch things that may have the flu virus on them.
- Stay home when you are not feeling well.
- After sneezing, wash your hands or use a hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol.
- Sneeze into a tissue, your sleeve, or your elbow. Do not cover your mouth with your hands.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions for Administrators of Schools and Child Care Programs

From the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS)

We are providing answers to frequently asked questions for school and child care personnel about the current H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu). We have dedicated a phone line specifically to answer questions from school and child care personnel. This line will be available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM Call: 223-3731.

There is a separate public inquiry line that is available to parents and other members of the public: 1-888-330-6764.

How do we determine it is necessary to close a school or child care program?

School and child care closure decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and local public health and education officials. In considering whether to recommend closure, public health officials will consider whether there is a confirmed or probable case; the severity of the virus; whether the patient was infectious when at the school or child care facility; and whether closure will decrease the spread of illness in the community. Frequent communication will take place with affected schools.

How long will a school or child care program closure last?

Decisions to re-open schools will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and local public health and education officials. Frequent communication will take place with affected schools.

What are the H1N1 influenza infection prevention recommendations for schools and child care programs?

At this time, NHDHHS recommends following the CDC's [Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs.](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm) (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>) This website contains links to printable materials including posters for use in your school.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza?

It is a respiratory disease. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

What should a school or childcare program do if a child shows possible symptoms of influenza during the school day?

Take these immediate actions:

- Contact parent or guardian
- Isolate the child from other children, under supervision of an adult
- Have the child wear a surgical mask if tolerated
- Limit the number of people who come into contact with the child
- Adults in contact should use a surgical mask and continue to wash hands frequently

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- Dismiss the child from school or child care for 7 days or until 24 hours after symptoms are gone
- Guide parents with questions to the public inquiry line at **1-888-330-6764**.

How will we know if a child in our school/child care is diagnosed with H1N1 influenza?

- NHDHHS is tracking all cases and will notify the appropriate school or child care programs if a probable or confirmed case is diagnosed.

If a child or other household member is diagnosed with H1N1 influenza, should other children who have had close contact be allowed to return to school or childcare?

This will be handled on case-by-case basis in consultation with NHDHHS.

See also CDC's [Interim Guidance for Swine influenza A \(H1N1\): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home.](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm)(http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm)

Should schools be interviewing faculty and students to determine whether they traveled to affected areas?

The probable cases we have seen in New Hampshire demonstrate that travel is not a determining indicator of the H1N1 virus.

It is more critical to look for flu-like symptoms in students and staff, and to instruct those with symptoms to not come to school or work, and to consult with their health care providers.

Should we exclude children from school/child care programs who are returning from affected areas, or had contact with people who traveled to affected areas?

The probable cases we have seen in New Hampshire demonstrate that travel is not a determining indicator of the H1N1 virus. It is more critical to look for flu-like symptoms in students and staff, and to instruct those with symptoms to not come to school or work, and to consult with their health care providers.

Are schools and childcare programs required to report to parents if there is a potential or diagnosed case of H1N1 influenza?

If a case is confirmed, NHDHHS will provide recommended actions.

Are there any special cleaning procedures for facilities at which there have been no confirmed cases?

- School custodians should follow routine cleaning and disinfection procedures for all buildings.

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- No special cleaning or disinfection products are recommended. Custodial staff should use appropriate personal protective equipment including gloves when using chemical cleaners or disinfectants.
- Childcare providers are required to follow NH Child Care Program Licensing cleaning and sanitation rules.

Are there any special cleaning procedures for facilities re-opening after closure for confirmed cases?

- When schools re-open, CDC recommends that commonly touched surfaces such as stairway railings, elevator buttons and door handles be cleaned by wiping them down with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants.
- Such products should be used according to product labels.
- Additional extensive cleaning of schools by wiping down floors and walls is not necessary.

What should schools and/or child care programs be thinking about if there are closures?

- If schools or child care programs close and there is a need for child care, families could plan to work together with two to three other families to supervise and provide care (using the same caregivers each day) for a small and consistent group of infants and young children while their parents are at work (studies suggest that child care groups with fewer than five children typically have fewer respiratory infections).
- Schools and child care facilities in unaffected areas should begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or child care facility closure. This includes asking teachers, parents and officials in charge of critical school-associated programs (such as meal services) to make contingency plans.
- If a school or child care program closes, school or childcare related gatherings, such as sports activities and field trips, should be cancelled until school reopens.

What should residential schools do if they have a student with influenza symptoms?

- Students should be voluntarily isolated either at home, in the infirmary, or another setting separate from non-affected students.
- Residential schools and programs and residential group homes should contact the school public inquiry line for NHDHHS for consultation on specific students.

These recommendations are subject to change as additional epidemiological and clinical data become available.

**Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
For Parents about Schools and Child Care Programs and the H1N1 Flu
From the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) and the New Hampshire
Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS)**

We are providing answers to frequently asked questions for parents about school and childcare and the current H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu). A public inquiry line is also available 8:00 AM-8:00PM for questions at **1-888-330-6764**.

How will I know if schools and child care programs should/will be closed?

School and child care closure decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and local public health and education officials. In considering whether to recommend closure, public health officials will consider whether there is a confirmed or probable case; the severity of the virus; whether the patient was infectious when at the school or child care facility; and whether closure will decrease the spread of illness in the community. Frequent communication will take place with affected schools. School closures will be announced just as they are for weather-related closures.

How will we know when schools re-open?

Decisions to re-open schools will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and local public health and education officials. Schools will announce plans to re-open just as they make announcements for weather-related closures.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza?

The symptoms of H1N1 are the same as for other types of flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

When should I keep my child home from school or childcare?

If your child has flu-like symptoms, consult your health care provider. If your child has influenza you should keep them at home for 7 days or until 24 hours after symptoms are gone. A public inquiry line is also available 8:00 AM-8:00PM for questions at **1-888-330-6764**.

What are the H1N1 influenza infection prevention measures I can take to protect my children and family?

Many good materials can be found at the CDC website www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu. We have also attached a good prevention handout.

How worried should I be about the H1N1 virus?

To date, the cases of H1N1 influenza in the United States have been mild, with most patients recovering well and not experiencing symptoms any more severe than the regular flu.

Health and public officials are monitoring this strain of influenza so closely because it is a new virus and we need to be alert in case it becomes more severe.

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What should I do if schools and/or childcare programs are closed?

- If schools or child care programs close you may want to think about working together with two to three other families to supervise and provide care. Studies suggest that child care groups with fewer than five children typically have fewer respiratory infections.

What if my child goes to a residential school and they or other students are sick with influenza symptoms?

- Residential schools are being advised to voluntarily isolate students either at home, in the infirmary, or another setting separate from non-affected students.

These recommendations are subject to change as additional information about the H1N1 virus becomes available.