

Important Information for Parents and Students about H1N1 Pandemic Influenza

Prepared by Brown County Public Health and Your School District (8/09)



What We Know

With a new school year and the change of seasons approaching, it is important to be prepared for a possible increase in illness from the H1N1 pandemic influenza virus. This is called the second wave of a pandemic.

Experts predict that this virus will continue to spread as long as there are people without immunity to the virus. Most people under age 60 have no immunity. It is unknown if the illness will stay the same or if it will cause more severe illness. Predictions are that this pandemic may possibly be as severe as the pandemic of 1957, when 70,000 Americans died from influenza.

Most people have been ill with mild to moderate symptoms and have recovered without medical treatment. However, some people have been hospitalized and there have been over 300 deaths in the US. Some of them were previously healthy people. Unlike seasonal flu, this influenza virus is attacking the under age 24 population at the highest rate.

People with a greater risk of hospitalization and death due to complications from this flu are:

- Pregnant Women
- Children and adults with respiratory conditions such as asthma, cardiac disease and diabetes
- People with suppression of the immune system due to illness or medical treatments like chemotherapy
- People with neurological or neuromuscular conditions that cause the coughing or breathing muscles to be weaker
- Small children under age 5 (under age 2 have a higher incidence of hospitalization)

It is likely that the new H1N1 pandemic virus will circulate in the population along with the seasonal flu strains as we enter our normal flu season.

Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against the H1N1 strain.

Preparations Being Made

- The US and other countries are working on a vaccine against this flu.
- Health care providers are preparing for an increase in people needing medical care at clinics and hospitals
- Medical supplies, including medications to treat ill people are stockpiled.
- Information for the public is available and updated as the situation changes

What Can You Expect?

- Seasonal flu vaccinations will likely be available earlier this year.
- When H1N1 vaccine is available, there may be school vaccination clinics and general community clinics.
- The groups at highest risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death will likely have priority for vaccination early in the vaccination campaign.
- You will be asked to keep your children home from school if ill, and to stay home from work if you are ill. This will help to protect the most vulnerable in the population, slow the spread of illness and give more time to vaccinate.
- If there are large numbers of ill people in your community, and you seek medical attention, you may be directed to a "flu center" at your local hospital/clinic.
- If illness is more severe, community measures may be used to slow the spread of the virus. These may include school dismissal, cancelling or postponing of public events and you may be advised to stay home as much as possible.
- There will be an abundance of media attention and information to sort through.
- Schools will be asked to keep track of the number of ill children so you may be asked about symptoms when you call the school to report your child will be home that day.

What Can You Do?

- Stay informed and get your information from reliable sources (see list).
- Look for information that will be distributed by your child's school, and follow recommendations given. (The school website may post information.)
- Plan for child care if your child is ill and needs to stay home (24 hours after fever free without the use of fever reducing medication) even if feeling well enough to return to school.
- Get your family vaccinated against seasonal influenza.
- Make sure you have a supply of food and other necessary items so that you can remain at home if asked to avoid public places.
- Follow the recommendations of public health officials, your health care provider and school administrators.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of H1N1 Influenza?

The symptoms are similar to seasonal flu:

- Fever (above 100°F)
- cough
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose
- In some cases diarrhea and vomiting

How does H1N1 influenza spread?

When a person with flu coughs or sneezes close to someone else (within 6 feet).

Touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Common-Sense Ways to Decrease the Spread of Influenza

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

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Throw the used tissue in the waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.
- Stay healthy: eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, and exercise.
- Teach children how to cover their cough and wash their hands.



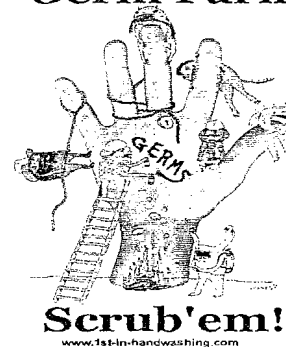
In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Germ Farm



More information:

Minnesota Department of Health:
www.health.state.mn.us

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1/
1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-63

Influenza-like Illness Symptom Screening Tool for Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers should use the following questionnaire to assess the health status of their child on a daily basis.

Does your child have:

1. Fever (100° F or greater)? Yes No
(take temperature before giving fever reducing medicine)
2. Sore Throat? Yes No
3. Cough? Yes No



SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD HOME?

- If you checked yes to fever AND one of the other symptoms, keep your child home for at least 24 hours after his or her fever is gone without fever reducing medicine. For many children this will be 5 to 7 days. Your child should feel well enough to participate in school before returning. If you have questions about your child's health or symptoms, call your child's healthcare provider.
- If your child has been diagnosed by a healthcare provider with a different disease, such as strep, follow your healthcare provider's recommendation and school policy for when to return to school.

WHAT SHOULD I TELL MY CHILD'S SCHOOL?

- If you checked "yes" for fever AND one of the other symptoms, tell your child's attendance office that your child is home with influenza-like illness.
- If your child has been diagnosed by a healthcare provider with a different disease, such as strep, tell your child's attendance office.
- No personal information about your child, including your child's name, will be shared outside of the school.

For more information and on-going updates 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 or go to the MDH website at: www.health.state.mn.us



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