



5 Things Schools Need to Know About H1N1 Flu

Department of Health & Human Services

The flu season coincides with the school season. This year schools and communities are not only facing the regular seasonal flu, but also the H1N1 virus, a potentially more dangerous strain. However, good planning now can allow schools to stay open, and protect students and staff, particularly those at high-risk of complications. Here are the 5 most important steps:

- 1. Make prevention the first line of defense.**
Everyone—students, teachers, administrators and other staff—need to make it a routine to wash their hands often with soap and water. Remind them to cough or sneeze into their sleeves or into a tissue, not in their hands. These steps are easy, but they only work if students, teachers, and every member of the staff participate.
- 2. Make sure you know who's at increased risk in your school.**
H1N1 flu spreads rapidly among kids between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age. The people who work with and care for them need to be careful as well. But this flu is especially risky for pregnant women and anyone between the ages of 25 through 64 who have chronic health conditions, for example, asthma, diabetes, or neuromuscular disorders. If children have underlying health conditions, encourage their families to contact a doctor at the first sign of symptoms.
- 3. Make sure sick people—children or adults—stay home.**
If conditions in your community become severe, you might even consider preemptive school dismissal. Actively watch for signs of illness—similar to seasonal flu—in students and staff: Fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose; achiness, headache, chills and fatigue. Sometimes H1N1 causes diarrhea and vomiting. Both H1N1 and seasonal flu can be severe and occasionally deadly.
- 4. Make sure staff and families get vaccinated.**
Vaccines are the best means we have to protect communities from flu. Vaccines for both H1N1 and seasonal flu will be available this fall. Scientists at the National Institutes of Health, the CDC, and the Food and Drug Administration are working around the clock with vaccine manufacturers to make sure that flu vaccines are safe and effective.
- 5. Go to flu.gov for the latest information on H1N1 and seasonal flu.**
Flu.gov is a one-stop government-wide resource with planning tools for schools and families to get a jump start on the 2009 flu season.