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Guidance for Schools/Child Care Facilities with Cases of Swine-Origin Influenza A H1N1 or Influenza-Like Illness

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As more cases of swine-origin influenza A H1N1 or influenza-like illness are identified, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is providing the following guidance for schools and child care settings. As more information becomes available, guidance may change in the upcoming weeks. It is important to stay informed by monitoring websites such as those provided below. Attached is the DPH fact sheet on swine flu, which you should feel free to provide to parents, students and staff. It is available on the DPH website, www.mass.gov/dph, in 14 languages.

As cases of influenza-like illness are identified, schools/child care facilities may want to consider increasing their surveillance and infection control measures to limit the spread of illness in their facilities. These measures are enhancements of what schools/child care facilities do during flu season to prevent illness in children and staff. Of note, the CDC and MDPH revised clinical guidelines now emphasize testing for swine-origin influenza A H1N1 only for those who are seriously ill or who have underlying conditions which put them at increased risk for complications from influenza. See "Interim Guidance On Testing And Antiviral Treatment For Influenza H1N1" on the MDPH website, www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu. Over time, the number of "confirmed" cases may diminish as routine testing diminishes, even though there may be a continuation of influenza-like illness in the community.

Parent and Staff Reassurance:

- Parents, faculty and staff may need to be reassured that the school/child care facility is taking appropriate steps to limit the spread of illness.
- Concerned parents, faculty and staff can be reminded that illness with swine-origin influenza A H1N1 is behaving like seasonal flu, so our responses should be what we would do for seasonal flu.

- Influenza is highly likely to be in the school or community, whether or not there is a confirmed case. Parents and staff should assume that they could be exposed to this new flu at school, at work or anywhere else in the community. Therefore, it is very important for everyone to continue to protect themselves with hand washing, cough etiquette, etc.

Guidance regarding ill students or staff:

- School or childcare participants with acute respiratory illness or influenza-like illness should be advised to stay home or be sent home according to the school's policy consistent with the CDC/MDPH recommendations. They should be instructed to stay at home for least 7 days after the onset of illness, or until 24 hours after their symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.
- This period of exclusion can be shortened if it is found that the child is unlikely to have influenza, for example if an alternative diagnosis, such as strep throat is made.
- Instructions should be given to seek medical care if symptoms worsen. Exclusion is *not* recommended for school or childcare participants who have recently traveled to an area where swine flu cases have been confirmed, and who do not have symptoms.
- *Definition of Respiratory Illness:* Acute respiratory illness is defined as recent onset of fever >37.8 (100F) and at least two of the following:
 - Rhinorrhea
 - Sore throat
 - Cough

Infection Control Measures to Consider:

- Monitor absenteeism in children and staff and follow up to determine if absence is due to influenza-like illness. School nurses and student health centers should report higher than normal absenteeism to your local health department or to the ***DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.***
- Consider screening children as they enter school, during home room or other appropriate time to identify any with fever and symptoms of influenza-like illness. Any ill child could then be isolated and sent home.
- If the ill child or staff member presents with upper respiratory symptoms, as well as fever, he/she should wear a mask, if available, until leaving the school to decrease the spread of the virus.
- If there are an unexpected number of absences in a particular class room or grade, consider screening the children in that class or grade to identify any that may have symptoms.
- Consider putting a bottle or two of hand sanitizer in each classroom to facilitate regular hand hygiene.

- Consider asking the teacher and school nurse to do presentations and demonstrations on handwashing and cough etiquette in each class. Educational materials, posters, etc., are available on the MDPH website, www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu.
- Consider arranging specific handwashing breaks before snack, lunch or at other specified times.
- Consider sending handwashing or other flu control educational materials home to parents and ask for their assistance in reinforcing these messages with their children.
- Distribute Flu Check List to families and ask that parents use it if they are unsure if their child is well enough to go to school.
- Consider an increased routine cleaning of classroom surfaces likely to be touched. However, this should be considered only as an *adjunct* to the efforts to increase handwashing, improve cough etiquette and keep ill children and staff home, because cleaned surfaces can easily become recontaminated during the day.

Special Populations:

Some children or staff may have significant underlying medical conditions that put them at increased risk for complications from any flu – seasonal or swine. These include:

- Children less than 2 years old;
- Persons aged 65 years or older;
- Adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV infection);
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders;
- Pregnant women;
- Children and adolescents (less than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy who might be at risk for experiencing Reye’s syndrome after influenza virus infection.

Staff or parents of children who fit any of the above criteria should discuss their specific situation with their doctor, just as they do when regular flu season starts.

For the most up-to-date information:

Massachusetts DPH swine influenza page as well as links to CDC: www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu

For general information about swine-origin influenza A H1N1, call MDPH information hotline at: 2-1-1

Centers for Disease Control Swine Influenza Website: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

Taking care of a sick person at home: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance_homecare.htm

Infection control and treatment guidance: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm>

School and/or Day Care Specific Resources:

All you have to do is wash your hands Podcast: This Podcast teaches children how and when to wash their hands properly.

<http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11072>

Downloadable Flu Prevention Materials for Schools/Day Cares:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>

Preventing the Spread of Influenza (the Flu) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff: Flu recommendations for schools and child care providers <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/childcaresettings.htm>

Protecting Against the Flu: Advice for Caregivers of Children Less Than 6 Months Old: Research has shown that children less than 5 years of age are at high risk of serious flu-related complications. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/infantcare.htm>

Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School: Fact Sheet
http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm

Ounce of Prevention: Tips and streaming video for parents and children about the steps and benefits of effective hand washing <http://www.cdc.gov/ounceofprevention/>

Clean Hands Saves Lives: Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. <http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/>

Hand washing to reduce Disease: Recommendations to Reduce Disease Transmission from Animals in Public Settings <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5605a4.htm>

BAM! Body and Mind. Teacher's Corner: In this activity, students will conduct an experiment on washing their hands. They will learn that "clean" hands may not be so clean after all and the critical importance of washing their hands as a way to prevent the spread of disease.

http://www.bam.gov/teachers/epidemiology_hand_wash.html

CDC TV - Put Your Hands Together: (Video) Scientists estimate that people are not washing their hands often or well enough and may transmit up to 80% of all infections by their hands.

<http://www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/HandsTogether/>

Cover your Cough Posters: Stop the Spread of Germs that Make You and Others Sick! Printable formats of "Cover Your Cough". Posters only available as PDF files.

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

CDC - Be a Germ Stopper: Posters and Materials: For Community and Public Settings Like Schools and Child Care Facilities). Cover Your Cough also available for health care settings.

<http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials.htm>

"It's a SNAP" Toolkit Program materials to help prevent school absenteeism activities for school administrators, teachers, students and others can do to help stop the spread of germs in schools. See the hand cleaning section of the "It's a SNAP" site at www.itsasnap.org/snap/about.asp.

Scrub Club <http://www.scrubclub.org>/Kids can learn about health and hygiene and become members of the Scrub Club(tm) at www.scrubclub.org. The site features a fun and educational animated Webisode with seven "soaper-heros" who battle nasty villains who represent germs and bacteria. Kids learn the six key steps to proper hand-washing through a webisode, hand-washing song, interactive games, and activities for kids, and educational materials for teachers are also available to download.

Talking with Your Children about H1N1: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/talkingtokids.htm>