

**Mount Sinai Union Free School District
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June 11, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This morning we were informed by a parent of a high school student that one of her children has tested positive for the H1N1 influenza, commonly known as Swine Flu. This is the only confirmed case within the district to date. It is reported that the student has a low grade case and is at home recovering, scheduled to return to school on Monday.

Communications from the Suffolk County Department of Health recommend that our schools remain open. It has been further recommended that if your child is showing symptoms of influenza like illness (fever of 100.0 degrees F. or more, with a cough, sore throat, etc.), you should contact your child's physician to determine if he or she requires treatment. Children affected with influenza should stay away from school and other activities for a seven day period or for 24 hours after symptom resolution, whichever is longer. If your child is not experiencing symptoms at this time, but is at a higher risk due to other medical conditions, you may still decide to contact his/her physician to determine if there is a need for preventive medication.

Please know that we remain committed to maintaining a healthy and safe instructional environment for your child. Below is some information from the Health Department. If you have further questions about the H1N1 virus (Swine Flu), you may get information at www.cdc.gov, www.nyhealth.gov, www.schoolhealthservicesny.com, or the 24-hour toll-free hotline at 1-800-808-1987.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony J. Bonasera
Superintendent

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**Prevention**

**Is there a vaccine against the H1N1 flu virus?**

At this time, there is no vaccine for H1N1 flu. The seasonal influenza vaccine does not provide protection against this new H1N1 flu. This makes ordinary precautions, such as covering coughs and washing hands, all the more important.

**What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these steps to protect your health:

- Avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with sick people as much as possible.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue if you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

### **Should I avoid large social events and other public gatherings?**

If you are at high risk of developing complications if you become infected with the H1N1 flu virus, consider staying away from public gatherings in communities where there are reported cases of H1N1 flu. People at high risk of complications include those with certain chronic medical conditions, children less than 5 years old, persons 65 years or older, people with weakened immune systems and pregnant women. Contact your health care provider if you have questions.

If you have any symptoms of an influenza-like illness (ILI), for example, fever with either cough or sore throat, stay home. See "What should I do if I get sick and have flu-like symptoms or am diagnosed with H1N1 flu?" below for more information on what to do if you or someone in your household develops an ILI.

At this time, CDC is not recommending that people wear masks or respirators at public gatherings. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

### **Can I get H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork?**

No. H1N1 influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

### **Should I avoid travel to other countries or areas of the United States where H1N1 flu has been identified?**

CDC has removed its recommendation that U.S. travelers avoid travel to Mexico. They have issued a "Travel Health Precaution" that recommends that you take steps to protect yourself from exposure to H1N1 flu if you travel to Mexico.

If you are at high risk for complications from any kind of influenza-like illness (ILI), consider postponing travel to Mexico or discuss the risks and benefits of traveling there with your health care provider. [More information on travel and current recommendations.](#)

### **Should I ask my health care provider for a prescription anti-flu drug to prevent H1N1 flu if I am healthy, not pregnant or do not have a chronic medical condition?**

No. Antiviral drugs are usually used to treat people who are at risk for developing life-threatening complications from the flu. There is no reason to routinely ask for one of these drugs to keep at home, or to take them just as a precaution. Over-use could result in limited supplies for those who need it most. In addition, over-use of antiviral drugs has been known to lead to flu viruses becoming resistant to the drugs. All drugs, including antivirals, can cause side effects and should only be used when necessary under the direction of a health care provider.

Consult your health care provider if you are pregnant or have a chronic medical condition. In some cases, taking a prescription antiviral medication may be recommended to prevent you from becoming infected with the H1N1 flu virus.

## Illness in the Household

### What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms or am diagnosed with H1N1 flu?

- Stay home and limit contact with others in your household as much as possible.
- To help prevent others in your household from becoming ill, wear a disposable facemask when close contact with other people in the home is unavoidable (including when breastfeeding, if applicable). Disposable facemasks can be purchased at pharmacies and medical supply, hardware or home improvement stores and may be labeled as surgical, dental, medical procedure, isolation or laser masks. Facemasks cover the nose and mouth and reduce the number of infectious droplets you may cough or sneeze into the air. Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately after removing the facemask and disposing of it in the trash.
- Unless necessary for medical care, stay home. If you must be in a public place, protect others by wearing a disposable facemask and make the time you spend in crowded settings as short as possible.
- Rest, drink plenty of clear fluids and take medications that you typically use to treat flu-like symptoms, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Promptly throw the tissue into the trash and wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid having visitors. If visitors must enter your home, they should avoid close contact with you.
- Stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.

### What precautions and steps should I take if I live with someone with confirmed H1N1 flu?

Follow the same steps and precautions you would to avoid ordinary seasonal flu:

- If you are taking care of someone with H1N1 flu, speak with your health care provider to see if you should take prescription antiviral medication to prevent catching it.
- If possible, place the person with H1N1 in a separate room, away from the common areas of the house or apartment. Respiratory treatments, such as inhalers and nebulizers, should be used by the ill person in a separate room away from common areas of the house when possible.
- Limit your contact with the sick person. Avoid close contact such as kissing and do **not** share towels, drinking glasses, eating utensils or toothbrushes with the ill person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- If you must have close contact (within 6 feet) with or are providing care to a member of your household with an influenza-like illness (ILI) or confirmed H1N1 flu **and** you are at increased risk of severe illness or complications from influenza, consider wearing a disposable facemask. After removing the facemask, throw it in the trash and immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Contact your health care provider if you have further questions.
- All household members, ill and well, should regularly wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Provide disposable tissues to ill persons to use to cover their mouth and nose whenever they sneeze, cough or blow their nose. Make sure they immediately throw their used tissues in a nearby wastebasket or trash receptacle. Both ill and well persons should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after touching used tissues, similar waste and after emptying wastebaskets or trash receptacles.
- Do **not** give infants, children and young people under 18 years old aspirin or aspirin-containing products, for example, regular Pepto-Bismol®, which can increase the risk of a rare and serious illness called Reye's syndrome. "Children's Pepto®" does not contain salicylates (sa-LIS-a-lates), of which aspirin is a type of, but does not treat diarrhea.

- Avoid having visitors. If visitors must enter the home, they should avoid close contact with the sick person.
- The dirty dishes, eating utensils, and laundry of the ill person do **not** need to be washed separately from other members of the household. Use detergent and wash as usual.
- Monitor well household members closely for the development of illness. If they develop influenza-like illness (ILI), for example fever and cough, they should stay home for 7 days after their symptoms begin or until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.

### **Can household cleaning help prevent transmission?**

Yes. To help prevent transmission, clean frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, refrigerator handle, toilet seat and handle. Clean all hard surfaces, for example, bedside tables, bathroom surfaces and children's toys, with a standard household disinfectant. If surfaces are visibly dirty, use a household cleaner first, then a disinfectant. Wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning surfaces and items. For more information, visit [Information about Cleaning and Disinfectants](#).

### **Further H1N1 information can be found on the following web sites**

- [General influenza information](#) from the New York State Department of Health
- [New York State H1N1 Influenza Update](#)
- [H1N1 \(SO\) Flu Information - New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#)
- [H1N1 Flu \(Swine Flu\) - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [2009 H1N1 Flu \(Swine Flu\) - National Library of Medicine](#)
- [Influenza A \(H1N1\) - World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

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