

Novel H1N1 flu (swine flu): Facts for families of school-aged children

What is novel H1N1 flu (swine flu)? Novel H1N1 flu, also known as “swine flu,” is a virus that can spread from people who are infected to others through coughs and sneezes. Novel H1N1 virus is not transmitted from pigs to humans or from eating pork products.

What should we do if someone in my family has symptoms? Stay home if you have flu symptoms: fever and cough or sore throat, body aches, vomiting or diarrhea. Make the decision to see a health care provider as you would when you are sick. Do not seek medical care if you are not ill or have mild symptoms for which you would not ordinarily seek medical care. If you feel sick enough to see a doctor, call your health care provider.

Why did some schools close? At the onset of this outbreak of a previously unknown influenza virus, we believed it prudent to close affected schools while we learned more about the characteristics of this new illness and the strategy for community measures to prevent illness. The closures have provided valuable time for us to gather information about this novel H1N1 influenza strain in our community. We appreciate the sacrifices families and schools have made to protect the health of the community during this early stage of the outbreak.

Will schools continue to close? Schools will no longer be advised to close based on the diagnosis of a probable or confirmed case of novel H1N1 flu. As with seasonal influenza, schools may be closed if larger numbers of students or faculty become ill. School closure appears less necessary given what we are observing about the spread of disease and the severity of illness currently associated with this novel H1N1 strain.

How do I protect my children and family from infection? Teach children to:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not nearby, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue or the crook of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- **Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way.
- **Stay away from people who are sick.**

Where can I get more information?

- Connecticut Department of Public Health novel h1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) web site: <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>