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Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Information for School and Childcare Settings

Two cases of swine influenza have now been confirmed in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is providing the following guidance for schools and child care settings. As more information becomes available and the situation unfolds, guidance is likely to change in the upcoming days and weeks. It is important for school administrators, school health officials and child care administrators to stay informed by monitoring the DPH website, www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu, which has links to the Centers for Disease Control swine influenza website.

DPH had developed a fact sheet on swine flu, which you should feel free to provide to parents, students and staff. It is available on the DPH website in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Khmer, Vietnamese and Haitian Creole.

Guidance for School and Childcare Settings

At this time, DPH recommends that schools and childcare settings increase education on respiratory hygiene and monitor attendees for acute febrile respiratory illness. (See DPH website, www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu for posters and materials to support these educational efforts.)

Staff and children (as developmentally appropriate) should all be taught and asked to follow these steps that prevent the transmission of infections such as influenza:

- Stay home if you are sick, especially with a fever.
- Wash hands frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes into a tissue or the inside of your elbow, not into your bare hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

School or childcare participants with acute febrile respiratory illness, regardless of travel history, should be advised to stay home or be sent home according to facilities-established procedures with instructions 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 is made. The 7 day period of exclusion would *not* apply to a child with an isolated fever and no respiratory or influenza symptoms.

Instructions should be given to seek medical care if symptoms worsen. At this time, 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 an acute febrile respiratory illness.

Definition of Acute 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

Disease Reporting and Consultation

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*.

For the most up-to-date information:

U.S. CDC Swine Influenza Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

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>

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

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.