



Parent Tips - H1N1 flu (Swine Flu)

Revised May 11, 2009

What is the H1N1 flu (Swine Flu)?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the H1N1 flu (Swine Flu) is a type of influenza (flu) virus that causes respiratory disease that can spread between people.

What are the symptoms?

In most children, the symptoms of H1N1 flu (Swine Flu) are similar to the symptoms of regular flu. They include: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue, and occasionally vomiting and diarrhea. Parents and caregivers should monitor their children every morning for symptoms of influenza-like illness.

H1N1 flu (Swine Flu) cannot be obtained by eating pork or any pork product.

How Do I Protect My Family From Getting the H1N1 flu (Swine Flu)?

Parents and their children should take common-sense measures to protect against contracting and spreading the flu. These measures include avoiding close contact with people who are sick, staying home when you are sick to help prevent others from catching your illness, covering your mouth or nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, cleaning your hands often, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, and practicing other good health habits such as getting plenty of rest and eating healthy food.

How Do I Talk to My Child About H1N1 flu (Swine Flu)?

Explain to children that this is another strain of the flu, but consider their age and maturity level. Try not to overwhelm them with information.

Suggested Approaches:

- **Maintain your composure.** Kids will worry if you act worried.
- **Talk about the Flu in an age-appropriate manner.** Explain to children that this is another strain of the flu, but consider their age and maturity level and make sure not to overwhelm them.
- **Be patient.** It's common for children to ask the same questions over and over.
- **Help children to express their concerns.** Encourage children to share what they are thinking, their concerns, and questions. Find creative ways of communicating, such as through art, writing, or music.
- **Listen.** Ask questions. Find out what your children know about the situation. Make sure they understand the facts, and discuss what they've seen or heard.
- **Make yourself available.** Your children may need extra attention from you. Make time for them.
- **Tell your children you love them, and offer plenty of hugs and kisses.** Maintain a strong level of affection in your home to help children feel calm.

What Are Some Key Topics Parents Should Communicate to their Children?

- At the present time, relatively few people are sick with the H1N1 flu (Swine Flu) in this country. School and health officials are being especially careful to make sure as few people as possible get sick.
- There are things we can do to stay healthy and avoid spreading disease, such as washing your hands, covering your mouths with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, and staying home when you don't feel well.

- It is important that all students treat each other with respect and not jump to conclusions about who may or may not have the flu.

What Are the Resources Available in My Community to Support Parents?

A Parent Teacher Association® (PTA), school nurse, school psychologist, or school social worker can be helpful resources to parents. Talk to your school nurse, school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker if your child is having difficulties as a result of anxiety or stress related to the flu. Parents should speak with a school principal regarding a potential school closure.

Will Schools Continue to be Closed?

As of May 5, 2009, the CDC has issued guidance that school and child care program closure is no longer needed for a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1 flu (Swine Flu). Schools that were closed are allowed to re-open.

The CDC is recommending, however, that children with influenza-like illness should stay home (or be sent home) and not attend school or child care programs for at least 7 days. If symptoms persist past 7 days, the CDC recommends the child should continue to stay at home at least 24 hours after his symptoms have subsided.

Where Can I Go For Further Information?

- The National Parent Teacher Association: www.pta.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key_facts.htm
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.hhs.gov
- U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov

Sources – US Department of Education, US Center for Disease Control, National Association of School Psychologists, and National Association of School Nurses.