



ADVICE ABOUT NOVEL A (H1N1) VIRUS IN SCHOOLS

According to several county health departments, the Novel A (H1N1) influenza (previously referred to as swine flu) is a new form of flu which began infecting people in April. It is expected to infect many this school year. Due to the rapid onslaught of this flu, no one is certain how serious it may be. It appears that infants, children and young adults have the least natural immunity and will need to follow the precautions most closely. Below are questions and answers about the flu and school.

Q. HOW DOES THE H1N1 FLU COMPARE TO REGULAR (SEASONAL) FLU STRAINS?

- So far, it doesn't seem any more deadly than seasonal flu, which kills 36,000 Americans a year and hospitalizes 200,000. But H1N1 does sicken the young much more frequently than the old, and it spreads very easily, especially in crowded schools. A University of Washington study found the typical sick school student infects two or three classmates, so **KEEP SICK KIDS AT HOME**.
- You can be contagious up to 24 hours before you show symptoms; this is one reason flu spreads so easily.

Q. HOW LONG SHOULD SICK STUDENTS STAY OUT OF SCHOOL?

- For 24 hours after the fever breaks naturally, and not due to fever-reducing medicine. Never give a child aspirin, only non-aspirin fever reducers.
- Local health departments and the CDC are recommending, as is the diocese, that schools should not close because people have flu-like symptoms. Last spring's school closings did not prevent the spread of the virus. Instead of closing schools, students and staff with flu-like symptoms will be sent home from school to avoid infecting others. Administrators do have the option to close schools if the number of absences dictates it.

Q. IF I GET SICK, WILL I BE QUARANTINED AND TESTED TO SEE IF I HAVE H1N1 FLU?

- Not necessarily. People with flu-like symptoms do not need to be tested. H1N1

will become common and test results won't change how patients are treated.

Q. WILL ANTI-VIRAL MEDICATION, LIKE TAMIFLU, HELP LESSEN THE SYMPTOMS OF H1N1?

- Most people with flu-like symptoms will not receive anti-viral medications. This is to reduce the likelihood of H1N1 becoming resistant to anti-virals. However, that recommendation should be made by your physician or health-care provider. Please call your doctor if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms. People who have a medical condition that makes them likely to develop complications from H1N1 will probably receive anti-virals if they have flu symptoms or if they are exposed to someone with flu symptoms.

Q. IS HAND USING HAND SANITIZER TOO OFTEN A CONCERN?

- Hand sanitizer should be used regularly. It is normally not any more drying to skin than soap.

Q. WHAT PRECAUTIONS ARE THE SCHOOLS TAKING?

- The diocesan schools have installed a three-step process to try to prevent the spread of H1N1:
 - 1. Isolation:** If a student complains of flu-like symptoms while at school, the student will be removed from the classroom and requested to wear a mask until a parent picks him/her up. This is to contain the virus from spreading to others.
 - 2. Communication:** A series of

communications to students, parents and school employees detailing the latest information about prevention will be available on a regular basis. This includes flyers, posters, E-mails, and instruction.

3. Supplies: Each school should have an adequate supply of tissues, hand sanitizers, disinfectants and masks.

Q. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF H1N1?

- The symptoms are similar to seasonal flu – fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body and headaches, chills and fatigue. Many people have also reported vomiting and diarrhea.

Q. ARE THERE RESOURCES I CAN GO TO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The following are health-related data-tracking Web sites on the H1N1 virus.

- www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/fluallery/2009-10/pdf/h1n1_take3.pdf
- Novel h1n1 Flu (Swine Flu): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidancehomecare.htm
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/flu and www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu
- Michigan Department of Community Health www.michigan.gov/flu
- Department of Health and Human Services www.flu.gov
- Childhood Influenza Coalition www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org
- Families Fighting Flu www.familiesfightingflu.org
- www.flu.gov/professional/community/cfbguidance.html