

As you all know, flu is serious and can cause illness in any age-group. Don't be confused about how to prepare for both seasonal influenza (flu) and novel (new) H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu). As our regular flu season arrives this fall, the same basic steps and precautions should be taken to be prepared for any type of flu virus.

As part of Governor Mike Beebe's health initiative, Bentonville Public Schools will be offering the seasonal flu (Not the H1N1) shot to school children and staff in grades PreK-12, beginning in November. We will be sending out more information about this at a later date.

Additionally, the federal government is working with vaccine manufacturers to develop a vaccine for the new H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu). When that vaccine is delivered to Arkansas, the Health Department will make those flu shots available, as well. This will not be administered within our schools. Please make arrangements to have this vaccine administered when it becomes available.

Please make sure you report ALL potential cases of the flu to your building registered nurse. The nurse can then assess the student and make the judgment call to keep the student at school or to send home. Please review the "Flu Facts" sheet attached – this will assist you in understanding flu symptoms.

If you are sick, please stay home. This alone will cut the spread of both seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu.

Here are steps you can take to limit the outbreak of flu within our schools and community:

- **Avoid close contact.**
  - **Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.**
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
  - **If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**
  - **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use your sleeve when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.**
- **Clean your hands.**
  - **Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**
  - **Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.**
- **Practice other good health habits.**
  - **Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.**

**When washing hands with soap and water:**

- Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.

- Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" twice through to a friend!
- Rinse hands well under running water
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the bathroom door when exiting.

**When should you wash your hands?**

- Before preparing or eating food
- After going to the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

**Remember:** If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based gel to clean hands.

***When using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:***

- Apply product to the palm of one hand
- Rub hands together
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

Information in Spanish: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/espanol/influenza-porcina-info-general.htm>

# FLU FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)



Arkansas Department of Health  
Keeping Your Hometown Healthy



## Flu Terms Defined

- **Seasonal (or common) flu** is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity (protection), and a vaccine is available.
- **Avian (AI) flu (Bird Flu)** is caused by flu viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. Low pathogenic AI is common in birds and causes few problems. Highly pathogenic flu is deadly to domestic fowl, can be transmitted from birds to humans, and can be deadly to humans. There is virtually no human immunity.
- **Pandemic flu, such as novel (new) H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu)**, is a human flu that causes a worldwide outbreak. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person.

## General Seasonal Flu Information:

### What is the seasonal flu?

Seasonal flu is a disease that causes mild to severe illness. Each year in the United States, there are 25-50 million infections, over 200,000 hospitalizations and roughly 36,000 deaths due to flu. Of those hospitalized, 20,000 are children younger than five years old. Over 90 percent of deaths and about 60 percent of hospitalizations occur in people older than 65.

### What are the symptoms of seasonal flu?

Symptoms of seasonal flu include: fever greater than 100 degrees, body aches, coughing, sore throat, chills, headache and body aches, fatigue, respiratory congestion, and in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact their physician or other health care provider.

### What is the best way to not get the seasonal flu?

The best way to stop the spread of seasonal flu is to get a flu shot each year. The shot takes one to two weeks to start working and is 70 to 90 percent effective in preventing the seasonal flu. The flu shot will not give you the flu! The shot is a vaccine that helps protect you against the seasonal flu virus. This shot will not protect you against the novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) virus.

### Who should get a seasonal flu shot?

**Everyone should get a flu shot.**

Individuals nine years and older will need one seasonal influenza shot and those less than nine years of age may need two shots. Be sure to check with your physician. Although all persons older than 6 months of age should get a seasonal flu shot each year, **those most at risk for complications from the seasonal flu are:**

- all children aged 6 months to 4 years;
- all persons aged 50 years or older;
- children and teenagers aged 6 months to 18 years who take aspirin daily;
- pregnant women;
- adults and children aged 2 years and older with chronic lung (including asthma) or heart disorders;
- adults and children aged 2 years and older with chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes), kidney diseases, blood disorders (such as sickle cell anemia), or weakened immune systems, including persons with HIV/AIDS;
- residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;

In addition, **those that live with or care for individuals that are at high risk for flu-related complications should also be vaccinated and include:**

- health-care workers involved in direct, hands-on care to patients and household members and out-of-home caregivers of infants under the age of 6 months;
- household contacts (including children), caregivers of children up to age four and adults aged 50 or older; and,
- household contacts (including children) and caregivers of persons with medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe complications from flu

## **Novel H1N1 Influenza A (Swine Flu) Information:**

### **What is novel (new) H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu)?**

The novel H1N1 Influenza A is a new flu virus causing illness in people and was called the "swine flu". This new virus was first found in people in the United States in April 2009. Other countries, including Mexico and Canada, have reported people sick with this new virus, which spreads from person-to-person in much the same way as regular seasonal flu spreads.



### **Why is the new H1N1 influenza A virus sometimes called "Swine Flu"?**

In the beginning, this virus was thought to be similar to flu viruses that normally occur in pigs in North America and was referred to as the swine flu. However, further study has shown that this virus is actually different from what normally circulates in North American pigs and is made up of two genes from viruses found in pigs in Europe and Asia, plus a gene from a bird and a human.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) in people?**

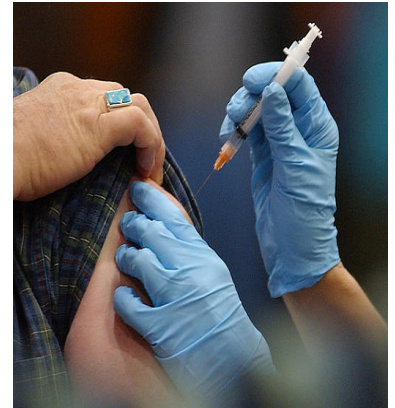
The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are much like the symptoms of the regular seasonal flu and include fever over 100 degrees, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting related to the H1N1 flu. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause already existing chronic medical conditions to get worse.

### **Is there a novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) vaccine?**

Not at this time; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is planning for the H1N1 vaccine to be ready by the fall of 2009. It may be possible that individuals will need to receive two shots for the H1N1 flu but the dosage has yet to be determined at this time.

## What groups are considered most at risk for complications from H1N1 flu and will be the first to be vaccinated?

- Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants less than 6 months old might help protect infants by “cocooning” them from the virus;
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity;
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age;
- Children from 6 months through 18 years of age because we have seen many cases of new H1N1 influenza in children and they are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread;
- Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because we have seen many cases of new H1N1 flu in these healthy young adults and they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population; and,
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from flu.



All Arkansans should take preventive measures and not become complacent. While the H1N1 flu virus currently is acting like a virus that might be seen during a typical flu season, the concern is how the virus might mutate.

## How many novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) cases are confirmed in Arkansas?

Following similar action announced recently by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Arkansas no longer reports the number of individual cases of H1N1 flu and **is only testing for H1N1 flu in those persons that are considered high risk.** These include pregnant woman, hospitals and severely ill patients and health care workers. However, the number of cases of novel H1N1 flu infection continues to increase and officials are certain that Arkansas has more H1N1 influenza in the state than what is being reported.

## Do you expect the H1N1 virus to spread again in the fall? And if so, do you expect to it be worse than it has been?

Yes. It is very possible that this new H1N1 virus will continue to circulate and cause much more illness again this fall or winter. Whether it will cause more illness than it's been causing recently, whether it will dominate among the seasonal flu viruses or whether it will really disappear is not known right now. We're mindful of the past that pandemics of influenza have sometimes come in waves and the very severe 1918 pandemic had a moderate or mild initial wave in the spring and a much more severe second wave in the fall. So that really terrible experience of 1918 is in our minds. But we can't tell you whether this virus will cause a lot of disease, some disease or no disease here in the northern hemisphere next season. We're focusing now on being prepared for the possibility that it will be serious. We do think that it is very likely this new influenza strain will be a problem in the fall, based on what we are seeing this summer in the US and in the Southern Hemisphere right now.

# Spread of the Novel H1N1 Influenza A Virus and Seasonal Flu Virus:

## How does the flu spread?

Spread of the novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) virus occurs in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with the flu. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.



## What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with your hand or a tissue when coughing or sneezing to prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the trash can. Wash or disinfect your hands every time you cough or sneeze.

## Can people catch novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) from eating pork?

No. H1N1 influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You cannot get the new H1N1 flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products are safe. Cooking pork to an inside temperature of 160°F kills virus and bacteria.

## Do pigs carry this virus and can I catch this virus from a pig?

No. At this time, there is no proof that swine in the United States are infected with this new virus. However, there are flu viruses that commonly cause outbreaks of illness in pigs. Most of the time, these viruses do not infect people, but influenza viruses can spread back and forth between pigs and people.

## How long can influenza virus stay alive on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being put on the surface.

## Is there a risk from drinking water? Can the new H1N1 flu virus be spread through water in swimming pools, spas, water parks, interactive fountains, and other treated recreational water venues?

No. Tap water that has been treated by the usual disinfection methods does not likely pose a risk for transmission of influenza viruses. Current drinking water treatment regulations provide a high degree of protection from viruses. To date, there have been no documented human cases of influenza caused by exposure to influenza-contaminated drinking water. Influenza viruses infect the human upper respiratory tract. There has never been a documented case of influenza virus infection associated with water exposure. These water sources are all treated with special substances that would kill the flu virus.

## Flu Virus, Food and Animals:

### Can people get the flu virus by eating food products?

No. Influenza viruses are not known to be spread by eating food items. Influenza viruses are spread through breathing or through touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes.

### Could a sick restaurant worker transmit flu virus to consumers in a restaurant or other food-service venue?

They could transmit the flu virus only if they cough or sneeze directly on you (person-to-person contact). Influenza is not known to be spread through eating a food item. However, in the long-standing FDA guidelines says that food workers experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness should not work with exposed food, clean equipment, utensils, linens or unwrapped single-service or single-use articles. In addition, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals experiencing symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus stay home from work.



### Can the H1N1 virus be transferred from humans to swine or vice versa?

USDA's National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa, is conducting tests to determine the transmissibility and severity of the H1N1 flu virus in pigs. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) through its surveillance, announced recently that it found the H1N1 flu virus in a swine herd in Alberta. The CFIA believes it is highly likely that the pigs were exposed to the virus from a Canadian who had recently returned from Mexico and had been exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Signs of illness were then observed in the pigs. The individual has recovered and all of the pigs are recovering or have recovered. The pigs are isolated. USDA continues to monitor the U.S. swine herd and to date, this particular strain of H1N1 has not been found in U.S. swine.

## Preventing the Flu:

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

Get a flu shot, and take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### What is the difference between a vaccine and an antiviral?

Vaccines are usually given to prevent infections. Influenza vaccines are made from either pieces of the killed influenza virus or weakened versions of the live virus that will not lead to disease. When vaccinated, the body's immune system makes antibodies which will fight off infection if exposure to the virus occurs. Antivirals are drugs that can treat people who have already been infected by a virus. They also can be used to prevent infection when given before or shortly after exposure and before illness begins. A key

difference between a vaccine and antiviral drug is that the antiviral drug will prevent infection only when given within a certain time frame before or after exposure and is effective during the time that the drug is being taken while a vaccine can be given long before exposure to the virus and can provide protection over a long period of time.

## **What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?**

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We strongly suggest that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

## **What kills influenza virus? What household cleaners kill the virus?**

Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics), and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time. For example, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used to clean hands. The gels should be rubbed into hands until they are dry.

## **How should linens, eating utensils and dishes of persons infected with influenza virus be handled?**

Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Linens (such as bed sheets and towels) should be washed by using household laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. People should avoid "hugging" laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating themselves. People should wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub immediately after handling dirty laundry. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.



## **Flu and the Workplace:**

### **Should a business consider closing if there are employees who have the flu?**

No. We do not recommend businesses to close if employees have the flu. Stay home if you are sick. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home for 24 hours after your fever is gone without taking fever reducers and all symptoms are resolved. While you are sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### **If I have a family member at home who is sick with flu, should I go to work?**

Yes. Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.



If they become ill, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs.

## **What can employers do to protect employees?**

- Encourage sick employees to stay home and away from the workplace, and provide flexible leave policies.
- Encourage infection control practices in the workplace by displaying posters that address and remind workers about proper hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
- Provide written guidance (email, etc.) on seasonal and new H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) flu appropriate for the language and literacy levels of everyone in the workplace. Employers should work closely with local and state public health officials to ensure they are providing the most appropriate and up-to-date information.
- Provide sufficient facilities for hand washing and alcohol-based (at least 60 percent) hand sanitizers (or wipes) in common workplace areas such as lobbies, corridors, and restrooms.
- Provide tissues, disinfectants, and disposable towels for employees to clean their work surfaces, as well as appropriate disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- One study showed that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface. To reduce the chance of spread of the flu virus, disinfect commonly-touched hard surfaces in the workplace, such as work stations, counter tops, door knobs, and bathroom surfaces by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

## **What can employees do to reduce the spread of flu in the workplace?**

- Stay home if you are sick. You should stay home until you are feeling better and 24 hours after fever is gone without taking fever reducers. While you are sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Following these recommendations will help keep you from infecting others and spreading the virus.
- Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people. If an employee suspects that they have been exposed to a sick person with the flu they may continue to go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day and should notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill.

## **What should be done when an employee comes to work with flu-like illness symptoms in a community where the flu virus is circulating?**

- Place the employee in a room by him- or herself.
- If the employee needs to go into a common area, he or she should cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue or wear a facemask if available and tolerable.
- Notify the employee's supervisor or employer.
- Send the employee home as soon as possible.
- Call for emergency medical services if the ill person develops any of the emergency warning signs.

In adults these include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting.

- The employee should stay home until they are feeling better and 24 hours after fever is gone without taking fever reducers. While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

## **What should be done for co-workers of an employee who is a suspected or confirmed case of novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu)?**

- Inform the employees of their exposure to a co-worker with flu during the ill person's infectious period.
- Have the employees monitor themselves for symptoms.
- Advise employees to check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a chronic health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.

## **What should be done for an employee with confirmed novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) while he or she is on travel status?**

- Notify his or her supervisor or employer if an employee becomes ill on travel or temporary assignment.
- If outside the U.S., contact medical provider or overseas medical assistance companies to assist in finding an appropriate medical provider in that country, if needed. A U.S. consular officer can help locate medical services. Take note that U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or to give medications, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

## **What are the considerations for Pregnant Employees with suspected novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu)?**

Pregnant women are known to be at higher risk for seasonal influenza complications. They might also be at higher risk for novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) complications. Pregnant women with flu-like symptoms should contact their health care provider.

## **What can businesses do to anticipate and respond to the impact of novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) on operations?**

- Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for dealing with flu issues and impact at the workplace, including contacting local health department and health care providers in advance and developing and implementing protocols for response to ill individuals.
- Determine who will be responsible for responding to ill individuals in the workplace, either through an established health clinic or as a first aid duty.
- Share your plans with employees and clearly communicate expectations.
- Identify essential employees, essential business functions, and other critical inputs (e.g. raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations by location and function should there be disruptions during the flu outbreak.
- Implement business continuity plans if there is significant absenteeism in the workplace during this outbreak.
- Review your plan with regard to increases or decreases in demand for your products and/or services during the outbreak (e.g., the need for hygiene supplies).
- Establish an emergency communications plan. This plan includes identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
- Develop platforms (e.g., hotlines, dedicated websites) for communicating Novel H1N1 influenza A (Swine Flu) status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers, and customers inside and outside the worksite in a consistent and timely way, including redundancies in the emergency contact system.

## What can businesses do to anticipate and respond to the impact of the flu on employees?

- Examine policies for leave and employee compensation and review with managers, supervisors, and employees so they are up-to-date on sick leave policies, leave donation, and employee assistance services that are covered under the different employee-sponsored health plans. Leave policies should be flexible and non-punitive.
- Plan for the possibility of unscheduled leave that encourages employees who are sick to stay at home to care for themselves and others who are ill with the flu or children dismissed from school.
- Establish policies for flexible worksite (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), if needed.
- Communicate policies for employee access to, and availability of, health care, mental health, and social services including corporate and community resources.

## Flu and the Schools:

### What can schools do to anticipate and respond to the impact of the flu on students, faculty and staff?

- CDC has released new guidance to help schools promote a safer environment for their students and staff and reduce exposure to influenza during the 2009-10 school year.
- The new guidance is designed to decrease the spread of regular seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu while limiting the disruption of day-to-day activities and the vital learning that goes on in schools.
- About 55 million students and 7 million staff attend the more than 130,000 public and private schools in the United States each day. By implementing these recommendations, schools and health officials **can help protect a fifth of the country's population from flu.**
- We know far more about the 2009 H1N1 flu virus than we did when it arrived in April. We know that closing schools is not the best option in most cases.
- With this guidance, we're providing a set of strategies that schools can use to stay open while doing what they can to protect students and staff, particularly those at high-risk of complications.
- The options schools use should match the severity of the illness that's being reported and local flu activity.
- For an outbreak similar to the spring 2009 H1N1 outbreak, CDC recommends stepping up basic good hygiene practices like hand washing, keeping sick students and staff away from school and helping families identify their children who are at high-risk for flu complications and would benefit from early evaluation from their physician if they develop the flu.
- If outbreaks become more severe, CDC recommends extending the time that sick people are away from school, allowing people at high risk for flu to stay home, actively watching for signs of illness in students and staff and considering preemptive school dismissal.
- The recommendations will be most effective when implemented together as a package that combines good hygiene and practices to keep those who are ill separated from those who are well, with more active interventions based on the severity of the flu outbreak.
- We do anticipate more illness from 2009 H1N1 influenza than this past spring and more school-based outbreaks because influenza is typically transmitted more easily in fall and winter. By taking planning steps now schools can help ensure they're prepared for any future flu activity.
- CDC and its partners will be continually monitoring the spread of flu, the severity of the illness it's causing (including hospitalizations and deaths) and whether the virus characteristics are changing. We will provide updated assessment of severity and revise guidance as indicated.

## Recommendations for outbreak similar to spring 2009

### Hand Hygiene/Respiratory etiquette

- First and foremost, the new guidelines emphasize the importance of promoting basic foundations of preventing flu: getting vaccinated, frequent hand washing with soap and water when possible, covering noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and staying home when sick.
  - CDC recommends that all children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday get a seasonal flu vaccine.
  - CDC recommends that all children from 6 months through 18 years of age receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available.
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used if soap and water are not available.
  - In places where alcohol-based sanitizers are not allowed, other sanitizers can be substituted but may not work as well.
  - If tissues are not available, coughing or sneezing into the arm or sleeve is recommended.
  - Schools should provide time for students to wash their hands whenever necessary and make tissues readily available to students and staff.

### Exclusion period

- Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without use of fever-reducing medicines and regardless of whether or not they are using antiviral drugs.
- Data from the spring 2009 H1N1 outbreak showed that most people had fevers for 2-4 days, which would require an isolation period of 3-5 days.
  - People with more severe illness are likely to have a fever for longer.
  - About 90 percent of cases transmitted within a household occurred within 5 days of the first case.
- Those who are sick should stay in the home during this period, except to seek necessary medical care and should avoid contact with others.

### Routine cleaning

- People can sometimes get flu if they touch droplets left on hard surfaces and objects by those who are ill and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface.
- School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other special cleaners is not necessary.
- Environmental cleaning should not be the primary focus of influenza prevention activities.

### Separate ill students and staff

- Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from other students until they can be sent home. CDC also recommends they wear a surgical mask if possible.
- Space is often a challenge in schools, so it's essential that schools begin to identify this area now. It should not be an area that's used for other purposes like a lunchroom.
- Schools should limit the number of staff who care for ill students before they can be sent home.
- Those caring for students should wear protective gear, such as a mask.

### Consider selectively dismissing students and staff

- Schools that serve pregnant students or medically fragile students may consider dismissing schools if they cannot protect students from flu with classes in session.
- Decisions should be based on the severity of disease in the community and should be made in collaboration with local and state public health officials.



Arkansas Department of Health  
Keeping Your Hometown Healthy