

# 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 have the virus to other people through coughs and sneezes. A person CANNOT get the novel H1N1 virus from a pig 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 (other symptoms may include body aches, vomiting or diarrhea). CDC recommends that people with flu symptoms remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are fever free (100.4 F), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, so you won’t infect people around you. 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 normally seek medical care. If you feel sick enough to see a doctor, call your health care provider.

## **Why did some schools close due to novel H1N1 during the previous school year?**

During the beginning of this outbreak in the spring of 2009, we believed it wise to close affected schools while we learned more about this new illness and how to prevent the spread of the illness. Closing schools gave us valuable time to gather information about this novel H1N1 influenza strain in our community and limit the possible spread of the virus.

We appreciate the sacrifices families and schools have made to protect the health of the community during this early stage of the outbreak. As we learned more about the virus, we found it unnecessary to close schools based on the diagnosis of a probable or confirmed case.

## **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 based on what we have learned about the spread of the disease and the severity of illness currently associated with this novel H1N1 strain.

## **My child just became ill with flu-like symptoms, what should I do?**

Students with fever, cough, or sore throat or other new respiratory illness **should not attend school** for at least 24 hours after they are fever free, or signs of a fever without the use of fever reducing medications.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

### **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.**

### **Is there anything else I should do during the upcoming flu season?**

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- Make sure you and your family get vaccinated for the seasonal flu AND the Novel H1N1 flu.
- Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
- Be wary of rumors regarding this virus. Accurate and detailed information can be obtained from your school or the SLVHD.
- Stay informed! Listen to media reports, visit your school website or the SLVHD website, and call 2-1-1 with any questions.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Salt Lake Valley Health Department H1N1 website [www.slvhealth.org](http://www.slvhealth.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>