



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

From: Epidemiology & Communicable Disease Program

To: School Administrators, School Nurses, Day Care Centers & Parents

August 21, 2009

Re: Updated Recommendations for Schools & Daycare centers for 2009-2010 flu seasons.

Based on the severity of 2009 H1N1 flu-related illness thus far, **CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness (ILI) remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100°F/37.8°C), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.**

This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer. The new recommendation applies to camps, schools, businesses, mass gatherings, and other community settings where the majority of people are not at increased risk for influenza complications. CDC recommends this exclusion period regardless of whether or not antiviral medications are used.

This guidance is designed to decrease exposure to 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. CDC will continue to monitor the situation and update the current guidance as more information is obtained on 2009 H1N1. 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 protect one-fifth of the country's population from flu. Collaboration with CDC, the U.S. Department of Education, state and local public health and education agencies, schools, students, staff, families, businesses, and communities is essential.

The decision to dismiss students should be made locally in consultation with the Will County Health Department and should balance the goal of reducing the number of people who become seriously ill or die from influenza with the goal of minimizing social disruption and safety risks to children sometimes associated with school dismissal. Based on the experience and knowledge gained in jurisdictions that had large outbreaks in Spring 2009, the potential benefits of preemptively dismissing students from school are often outweighed by negative consequences, including students being left home alone, health workers missing shifts when they must stay home with their children, students missing meals, and interruption of students' education. The overall impact of 2009 H1N1 should be greater than in the spring, and school dismissals may be warranted, depending on the disease burden and other conditions.

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Recommended school responses for the 2009-2010 school year as follows:

Under conditions with similar severity as in spring 2009

Stay home when sick: Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if using antiviral drugs.

Separate ill students and staff: Students and staff who appear to have ILI should be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and that those who care for ill students and staff wear protective gear such as a mask.

Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette: Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.

Routine cleaning: School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary.

Early treatment of high-risk students and staff: People at high-risk for influenza complications who become ill with ILI should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

Consideration of selective school dismissal: Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk (for example, schools for medically fragile children or for pregnant students) a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk students.

CDC may recommend additional measures to help protect students and staff if global and national assessments indicate that influenza is causing more severe disease. In addition, local health and education officials may elect to implement some of these additional measures.

Under conditions of increased severity compared with spring 2009

Active screening: Schools should check students and staff for fever and other symptoms of flu when they arrive (and throughout the day), separate those that are ill and send them home as soon as possible.

High-risk students and staff members stay home: People at high-risk of flu complications should talk to their doctor about staying home from school when a lot of flu is circulating in the community. Schools should plan now for ways to continue educating students who stay home.





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Students with ill household members stay home: Students who have an ill household member should stay home for five days from the day the first household member got sick. This is the time period they are most likely to get sick themselves.

Increase distance between people at schools: CDC encourages schools to try innovative ways of separating students, for example, moving desks farther apart or canceling classes that bring together children from different classrooms.

Extend the period for ill persons to stay home: If influenza severity increases, people with ILI should stay home for at least 7 days, or until 24 hours after they have no symptoms, whichever is longer.

School dismissals: School and health officials should work closely to balance the risk of flu in their community with the disruption dismissals will cause in both education and the wider community. The length of time schools should be dismissed will vary depending on the type of dismissal as well as the severity and extent of illness. Schools that dismiss students should remain open to teachers and staff so they can continue to provide instruction through other means.

For updated information on resources for schools, child care programs, colleges and universities, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/>

If you have any questions, please contact the Will County Health Department at (815) 727-8481.

