

H1N1(Swine) Flu

Frequently Asked Questions

Schools

☀ **Why is there a concern about the spread of H1N1 (Swine) Flu in schools and universities?**

When students get sick with the flu, schools can serve as a location where the virus easily spreads. The largest number of cases in the U.S. occurred in the 5 to 24-years-old age group.

☀ **Which students and staff are at higher risk for complications from flu?**

Children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions and people age 65 years and older are more likely to get complications from the flu.

☀ **How will health and educational professionals work together to protect students and staff?**

Health officials monitor national, state and local data for flu-like illness. Health and Education leaders will communicate with students and staff about needed actions.

☀ **What can families, students, and school personnel do to reduce the risk of flu?**

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands.
- Practice respiratory etiquette. Cover your sneeze and cough.
- Stay home if you're sick. Keep viruses away from others.

☀ **How do I recognize a fever?**

A fever is a temperature that is equal or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius). Obvious signs are feeling warm, having a flushed appearance, sweating or shivering.

☀ **What should I do if I'm pregnant and I work or attend a K-12 school?**

Pregnant women are part of the first group to receive the H1N1 (Swine) Flu vaccine. Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from flu and should speak with their doctor if they develop a flu-like illness or are exposed to influenza.

☀ **Can the virus live on surfaces, such as computer keyboards?**

Yes, flu viruses may be spread when a person touches droplets left by coughs and sneezes on hard surfaces (such as desks, hand rails, elevator buttons and door knobs) or objects (such as keyboards or pens) and then touches his or her mouth, nose or eyes.

☀ How long should a sick student or staff member be kept home?

At least 24 hours *after* they are fever-free without using fever-reducing drugs.

☀ What can schools do to increase social distance during a more severe flu outbreak?

School officials increase the space between students. Some options include:

- rotating teachers between classrooms while keeping the students in one classroom
- canceling classes that bring students together from multiple classrooms
- holding classes outdoors
- postponing class trips
- dividing classes into smaller groups
- moving desks farther apart
- moving classes to larger spaces to allow more space between students.

☀ Why would one school dismiss students and another school continues to remain open?

School actions will vary based on the severity and the impact illness is having a school. Dismissal decisions will be made at the community level, based on the number and severity of cases in the school and community.

☀ What can a parent do to prepare for flu during the 2009-2010 school year?

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- Monitor the health of your child by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Identify a separate room to care for sick family members. Designate a single person as the main caregiver for anyone who gets sick.
- Organize games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family busy while at home.
- Talk to your school about their flu pandemic or emergency plan.
- Get your family vaccinated for seasonal and H1N1 (Swine) Flu.

For more information visit www.flu.maryland.gov or call 1-877-MDFLU4U



Martin O'Malley, *Governor*
Anthony G. Brown, *Lt. Governor*
John M. Colmers, *Secretary, DHMH*