



**Instructions for School and District Sites on  
Managing Students and Staff with Flu-Like Symptoms\***

*\*These are based on CDC recommendations, as of **October 2009**, and pertain to times when flu virus symptoms are not severe. These instructions will be updated as necessary.*

(Last revision: October 23, 2009)

**Preparing Your School for Flu**

1. Identify a room to house students with flu-like illness until they are taken home. To isolate them from others, the location should be separate from, but not distant from, the nurse's office. If a separate isolation room is not available, the health office can be partitioned off as another option. Passage of other students and personnel through the health office should be limited at all times during the day to help prevent the spread of the flu.
2. Plan for how the room/area will be staffed if one or more students are awaiting pick-up. To the extent feasible, limit the number of staff assigned to evaluating and observing ill children.
3. Stock face masks that will fit students using the isolation area. Plain surgical masks are best.
4. Have masks available for staff assigned to observing students in isolation and assisting students sent to the health office for influenza flu-like illness (i.e., taking temperatures). N95 masks (also called "respirators") that are pre-fitted for each individual are ideal, but in the absence of these, use any N95 mask that offers the best fit or another mask if N95 masks are not available. Display and distribute written instructions on how to use these masks properly. (Instructions provided separately from Nursing and Wellness).
5. Make sure bathrooms are equipped with soap and paper towels.
6. When access to sinks with soap and water cannot logistically meet student and staff hand washing needs, provide hand sanitizer (min. of 60% alcohol). Encourage the use of hand sanitizer or washing upon school arrival, before and after recess and lunch, and especially after coughing or sneezing into ones hands, handling used tissues, and handling used masks.
7. Display educational posters and make other outreach efforts that emphasize: hygiene (i.e., coughing and sneezing into tissue or sleeve of arm, hand washing); staying home when sick; and the importance of getting flu vaccines (both seasonal flu and pandemic H1N1 flu vaccines).
8. Clean surfaces and items which are more likely to have frequent hand contact (e.g., doorknobs, desk tops, keyboards) with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not necessary or recommended by health department officials.

**Managing Influenza-like Illness: Individuals and Outbreaks**

1. Persons with influenza-like-illness (ILI) are considered to have H1N1 flu. The definition of influenza-like illness is a fever of  $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$  **and** cough **and/or** sore throat. (Other symptoms such as chills, aches, headache, runny or stuffy nose, nausea and vomiting are sometimes present.)
2. Staff should be relieved from duty and sent home as soon as possible.

3. Students should be isolated from others in an isolation room/area (with supervision, with limited number of staff caring for these students). Ill children should be offered clear fluids and observed for signs that urgent care is required.
4. Once temperature has been measured and recorded, school nurses may offer acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) if there is signed parental consent on record.
5. Caretakers of sick children should wear facemasks (also called “respirators” or N95 masks) when caring for sick children. Instructions on how facemasks are to be used should be distributed with these masks.
6. Provide masks to sick persons to wear, if they can tolerate it. **Do not force a child or staff member to wear a mask.**
7. There are no restrictions on healthy siblings of ill children.
8. Report high rates of flu-like illness among staff and students to Nursing and Wellness at (858) 627-7580. The Nursing and Wellness Office is in communication with Community Epidemiology at the Public Health Department. An “outbreak” is defined by the California Department of Public Health as a minimum of 20% of persons in a classroom or other closely-linked group who have had the onset of flu-like symptoms within a 7-day period. A minimum of 5 persons must constitute the 20%.
9. Do not send notices to parents about flu outbreaks until you have consulted with the Nursing and Wellness Office. It must be established that a school or classroom meets the criteria for “outbreak.” **Schools may only use pre-approved notice templates by mail, e-mail or telephone.**
10. **Maintain confidentiality.** Federal laws prohibit schools and the district from releasing medical-related information about students or employees. Do not release numbers or names of specific students or employees with influenza-like illness or identify classrooms with outbreaks to persons not employed by the district, with the exception of public health authorities. The school principal may identify grade level to the public if this information does not assist with the identity of students or employees.

### **Referral to Medical Facilities**

1. **Most people with flu do not require a physical examination by a doctor.** Do not routinely recommend visiting a physician’s office to students and staff who are not at high risk for complications. This decision is at the discretion of ill staff members and parents of ill students. An Influenza A test is not required to document H1N1 infection. Symptoms alone are assumed to be H1N1 infection. For documentation purposes, suspected and “confirmed” cases are both significant and not to be treated differently.
2. Advise persons with the following conditions to **call and notify their physician** about flu symptoms as they may be candidates for anti-viral medication and/or physical exams:
  - Lung problems including asthma, cystic fibrosis, tracheostomy, or anyone requiring oxygen or a ventilator
  - Diabetes and other metabolic conditions
  - Kidney disease
  - Heart disease

- Nervous system or muscular disorders or seizure disorders (including cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy), especially if they have been associated with breathing problems or are exposed to an increased risk of inhaling oral secretions
  - Blood disorders, such as sickle cell or other severe anemia
  - A weakened immune system, for example, caused by cancer or cancer treatment
  - HIV/AIDS, organ transplant, or corticosteroid therapy
  - Pregnant
  - Younger than age 5 or older than age 65
  - Lives in a household with someone with one of the above conditions or with an infant under age 6 months
3. Advise persons with the following symptoms to **see a doctor that day**:
- Sudden dizziness
  - Not drinking enough fluids
  - Confusion
  - So irritable that child does not want to be held
4. Consider **urgent medical referral, including calling 911** for persons with these symptoms:
- Breathing quickly or trouble breathing from the chest
  - Bluish or gray skin color
  - Severe or persistent vomiting
  - Not waking up or interacting
  - Severe abdominal pain or chest pain or pressure

#### **Returning to School After Flu-like Symptoms**

*Note: These CDC recommendations are based on minimizing exposure to large numbers of other people who are at high risk for flu complications.*

All students and employees may return when fever-free for 24 hours without the use of Tylenol, Motrin or other fever-reducing drugs during those 24 hours.

#### **Parent-Initiated Measures**

1. Parents may send hand sanitizer to school for their own child's use. They may also contribute to the school supply, if appropriate (i.e., 60% minimum alcohol content).
2. Some parents send healthy children to school wearing masks. This should be tolerated, but not encouraged.
3. Encourage parents to pre-plan child care options if their child becomes ill and is excluded from school or the classroom, or if school is closed due to high infection rates.
4. It is strongly recommended that parents have all of their children over 6 months of age vaccinated against both seasonal and H1N1 flu as soon as the vaccines are available at their doctor's office or a community or public health clinic. The vaccination is truly the primary method to prevent the spread of H1N1 and seasonal flu.

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