

Tennessee Department of Health
Novel H1N1 “Swine” Influenza: Advice for Child Care Facilities and Schools

The Tennessee Department of Health is working with federal, state and local governments to prepare to respond to the outbreak of a novel flu virus, commonly referred to as swine flu. While no cases have yet been diagnosed in Tennessee, new cases are being identified daily in other states and internationally.

The state of Tennessee prepares continually and has a thorough plan in place to respond to a potential threat to public health in Tennessee. The Tennessee Department of Health has nationally-known medical experts who are trained to implement a state-level effort necessary to ensure health and well-being of Tennessee residents. The department is conducting surveillance to determine if any individuals in Tennessee have this strain of the influenza virus and collaborating with U.S. Health and Human Services to ensure Tennessee has adequate medical supplies and necessary medications on hand should they be needed.

Children in child care facilities and schools easily share viral infections because of their close contact, inadequate hand hygiene, and because they may have higher quantities of virus in their respiratory secretions for a longer time than an adult. For these reasons, the following recommendations are made for children in schools or child care facilities. For general information, see www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

A. Steps to take immediately:

1. Adhere strictly to normal good-health habits
 - a. Practice good hand washing regularly. Have soap, water and paper towels available at sinks or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
 - b. Cover coughs and sneezes – make tissues available and teach proper disposal of used tissues.
 - c. Exclude children who are sick from child care or school until fully recovered for at least 1 day.
2. Educate children of all ages about good health habits
 - a. One widely available book for young children is “Germs are not for Sharing.” Complimentary copies were provided in early 2008 by the Tennessee Department of Health to all child care facilities, head start programs, elementary schools and public libraries.
3. Schools and child care facilities can reduce the risk of spreading all types of infections by regularly wiping down toys and hard surfaces that are in contact with children’s hands with an EPA-registered disinfectant.
4. Advise parents to plan for caring for children at home if they are sick (emphasize strict enforcement of exclusion of sick children with any respiratory illness)
5. Advise parents to make plans to care for children at home if longer term (weeks) closure of child care facilities is necessary.

6. School and childcare officials should begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or childcare facility closure. This includes asking teachers, parents and officials in charge of critical school-associated programs (such as meal services) to make contingency plans.

B. If swine flu virus is confirmed to be present in a community, CDC offers Guidance for School Dismissal and Childcare Facility Closure (published 4/26/09):

- Public health and educational authorities would consider dismissal of students in schools with a confirmed or epidemiologically linked suspect case of swine flu.
- Decisions regarding broader school dismissal within these communities will be made by public health and school authorities based on the local situation.
- If a school were to dismiss students or a childcare facility were to close, they would also cancel all school or childcare related gatherings and encourage parents and students to avoid congregating outside of the school.
- Schools and childcare facilities would dismiss students for a time period to be evaluated on an ongoing basis depending upon public health guidance.
- Schools and childcare facilities would consult with public health authorities for guidance on reopening.

For more information about the current flu outbreak, visit the Department of Health Web site at <http://health.state.tn.us/swineflu.htm>. Additional information is also available at the CDC's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>.