



Pat Quinn, Governor
Damon T. Arnold, M.D., M.P.H., Director

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Illinois State Board of Education
Public and Private Schools

FROM: Damon T. Arnold, M.D., M.P.H., Director
Craig Conover, M.D., Medical Director, Office of Health Protection
Karen McMahan, Immunization Section Manager

DATE: April 29, 2009

RE: Swine Influenza - Recommendations for Schools

As you know, swine influenza has been identified in the United States and there has been at least one school-associated outbreak that has been identified in New York City. The Illinois Department of Public Health reminds schools that novel influenza is a reportable illness.

Please report the following situations to your local health department for further follow-up:

1. Absenteeism beyond what would be expected at this time of year at your school
2. Febrile respiratory illness (see below) beyond what would be expected at this time of year at your school

Definitions of Respiratory Illness

1. Febrile respiratory illness

Fever or feverishness and recent onset of at least one of the following:

1. rhinorrhea or nasal congestion
2. sore throat
3. cough

School Dismissal and Child Care Facility Closure

- Dismissal of students should be strongly considered in schools with a confirmed or a suspected case epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case.

- Decisions regarding broader school dismissal within these communities should be left to local authorities, taking into account the extent of influenza like illness (ILI) in the community.
- If the school dismisses students or a childcare facility closes, they should also cancel all school or childcare related gatherings and encourage parents and students to avoid congregating outside of the school.
- Schools and childcare facilities should dismiss students for a time period to be evaluated on an ongoing basis depending upon epidemiological findings.
- Schools and childcare facilities should consult with their local or state health departments for guidance on reopening. If no additional confirmed or suspected cases are identified among students (or school-based personnel) for a period of seven days, schools may consider reopening.
- Schools and childcare facilities in unaffected areas 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.

Recommendations for Infection Control in School Settings

Parents should be advised to keep their children home if they become sick with flu-like symptoms and to notify their school principal of the child's absence. Parents should contact their health care providers if their children have symptoms consistent with influenza.

Schools play a vital role in the process to prevent disease within their communities. Because there is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine influenza, it is important to emphasize the importance of everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Students, parents and faculty should take these everyday steps to protect their health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed Interim Guidance for Non-pharmaceutical Community Mitigation in Response to Human Infections with Swine Influenza Virus. These recommendations are based on current information and are subject to change based on ongoing surveillance and continuous risk assessment and can be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/mitigation.htm>.

Additional information can be viewed on the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site <http://www.idph.state.il.us/>.