



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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April 27, 2009

Dear School District Administrator:

Many of us are hearing information regarding the infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) that is occurring in the United States, Mexico, and other parts of the world. State officials, led by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), have been monitoring the situation and continue to observe this situation very closely.

To date, no confirmed cases of swine influenza have occurred in Wisconsin despite intensive surveillance. However, state health officials believe it is quite possible that some may be reported in the next few days.

In the United States, there have been 40 confirmed cases of swine flu, limited to California, Kansas, New York City, Ohio and Texas. Although the virus that is causing illness in Mexico and the United States are identical, the U.S. is experiencing less severe outcomes with only 2 cases requiring hospitalization and no deaths.

This swine influenza A virus is a new virus that has not been identified previously in people, and viral person-to-person transmission appears to be occurring. Swine flu is thought to be spread via person to person contact through contaminated air droplets from coughing and sneezing from an infected person. The virus is not spread by food including pork or pork products. Eating properly cooked and handled pork products is safe.

The symptoms of human swine flu are similar to the regular seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu have reported additional symptoms such as runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. In some situations, the virus can develop into pneumonia. It is believed that the seasonal influenza vaccine does not provide protection against swine flu.

School personnel and students should consider the following prevention measures:

- cover all coughs and sneezes,
- washing hands frequently and especially after coughing, sneezing, and blowing one's nose,
- avoid touching of nose, mouth, and eyes, and
- proper disposal of all contaminated tissues.

Recommendation for management:

- A person with the influenza-like-illness should be strongly encouraged to self-isolate in their home for seven days after the onset of illness, or at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved. Individuals who seek medical care will want to call their medical provider to report their illness prior to seeking care at clinic, physician's office and hospital.
- Monitor the school daily attendance rates and report increase in absente rates related to respiratory illness to your local health department.
- Collaborate with your local health department and medical advisor regarding surveillance, health promotion, and preventative measures.
- Develop and update your local school district's pandemic flu plan. Pandemic flu development resources can be found at the Department of Public Instruction website at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pandemicflu.html>

Working together with our community partners, Wisconsin school districts can provide clear health guidance and promotion for our schools and communities. A list of useful resources is available below. Call with questions or concerns at (608) 266-8857.

Sincerely,

Rachel Gallagher, R.N.  
School Nurse Consultant

Wisconsin resources:

- Department of Health Services  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov>
- Wisconsin Pandemic Influenza Information  
<http://pandemic.wisconsin.gov>

CDC resources:

- Center for Disease Control, key facts regarding swine flu in English:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key\\_facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key_facts.htm)
- Center for Disease Control, key facts regarding swine flu in Spanish:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/espanol/swine\\_espanol.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/espanol/swine_espanol.htm)
- Seasonal Flu Information for Schools & Childcare Providers: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>
- Center of Disease Control Surveillance website: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/index.htm>
- Center of Disease Control, Stopping Germs at Home, School and Work:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home\\_work\\_school.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm)

CDC school materials and posters:

- Stop the Spread of Germs site at [www.cdc.gov/germstopper](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper)
- Ounce of Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ounceofprevention/>
- Cover your Coughs website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>