

May 6, 2009

**To parents, students and staff of Connecticut schools,**

Probable and confirmed cases of novel H1N1 flu (swine flu) have been identified in Connecticut. We expect that with time, additional cases will be identified here and elsewhere in the country.

New information on disease severity prompted health experts to revise the school closure guidance that was initially published. The majority of U.S. cases have been less severe than initially reported from Mexico with fewer hospitalizations and deaths. CDC and local and state health officials will continue to closely monitor the severity and spread of this novel H1N1 influenza outbreak.

**The most important message at this time is not new: Students and adults who are sick should NOT come to school.** In particular, stay home if you have flu symptoms: fever and cough or sore throat, sometimes with runny or stuffy nose, body aches, vomiting or diarrhea. To avoid infecting others, please stay home and stay away from others for at least 7 days or until all symptoms have gone away for at least 24 hours, whichever is longer. Make decisions about when to seek medical care as you would under normal circumstances, and if you have flu symptoms, seek care if you have a fever for three or more days and seem to be getting sicker.

On May 5, 2009, CDC updated its guidance to reflect a more developed understanding of the H1N1 virus. Based on this information, CDC changed its recommendation to focus school-based efforts on early identification of ill students and staff, a recommendation to stay home when ill, and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette as the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools. Decisions about school closure should be at the discretion of local authorities based on local considerations, including public concern, the impact of school absenteeism, and staffing shortages.

Like other flu viruses, novel H1N1 flu spreads from an ill person to others mainly through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or rubbing their eyes. People with novel H1N1 flu are thought to be able to spread the infection to others for approximately 7 days after becoming sick.

Children and adults who are well and without symptoms of flu do not need to be excluded from school or work on the basis of recent travel to an area with novel H1N1 flu or close contact with someone with novel H1N1 flu. However such persons should closely monitor their health and should not attend school or work if they develop any symptoms. If symptoms develop while at school or work, arrange to return to home immediately.

**It is very important to teach our children what we all need to do to prevent spread of the virus:**

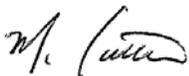
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Cover your cough or sneeze** with the crook of your elbow or a tissue.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If water is not nearby, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way.
- For more information, please see our attached
  - *Novel H1N1 flu (swine flu): Facts for families of school-aged children*
  - *Novel H1N1 flu (swine flu): When to keep your child home from school*
  - *Flu Symptom Check List for Families and School Staff*

More information, including frequent updates, is available online:

- Connecticut Department of Public Health H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) web site: <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,



Matthew L. Cartter, MD, MPH  
State Epidemiologist