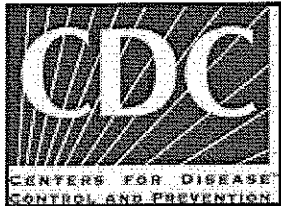




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Novel H1N1 Flu: Background on the Situation



Author: Array

Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

A Pandemic Is Declared

On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) signaled that a global pandemic of novel influenza A (H1N1) was underway by raising the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6. This action was a reflection of the spread of the new H1N1 virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. At the time, more than 70 countries had reported cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) infection and there were ongoing community level outbreaks of novel H1N1 in multiple parts of the world.

Since the WHO declaration of a pandemic, the new H1N1 virus has continued to spread, with the number of countries reporting cases of novel H1N1 nearly doubling. The Southern Hemisphere's regular influenza season has begun and countries there are reporting that the new H1N1 virus is spreading and causing illness along with regular seasonal influenza viruses. In the United States, significant novel H1N1 illness has continued into the summer, with localized and in some cases intense outbreaks occurring. The United States continues to report the largest number of novel H1N1 cases of any country worldwide, however, most people who have become ill have recovered without requiring medical treatment.

Given ongoing novel H1N1 activity to date, CDC anticipates that there will be more cases, more hospitalizations and more deaths associated with this pandemic in the United States over the summer and into the fall and winter. The novel H1N1 virus, in conjunction with regular seasonal influenza viruses, poses the potential to cause significant illness with associated hospitalizations and deaths during the U.S. influenza season.

A Virus Emerges

Novel influenza A (H1N1) is a new flu virus of swine origin that first caused illness in Mexico and the United States in March and April, 2009. It's thought that novel influenza A (H1N1) flu spreads in the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread, mainly through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with the virus, but it may also be spread by touching infected objects and then touching your nose or mouth. Novel H1N1 infection has been reported to cause a wide range of flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. In addition,

many people also have reported nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea.

The first novel H1N1 patient in the United States was confirmed by laboratory testing at CDC on April 15, 2009. The second patient was confirmed on April 17, 2009. It was quickly determined that the virus was spreading from person-to-person. On April 22, CDC activated its Emergency Operations Center to better coordinate the public health response. On April 26, 2009, the United States Government declared a public health emergency and has been actively and aggressively implementing the nation's pandemic response plan

By June 19, 2009, all 50 states in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have reported novel H1N1 infection. While nationwide U.S. influenza surveillance systems indicate that overall influenza activity is decreasing in the country at this time, novel H1N1 outbreaks are ongoing in parts of the U.S., in some cases with intense activity.

CDC is continuing to watch the situation carefully, to support the public health response and to gather information about this virus and its characteristics. The Southern Hemisphere is just beginning its influenza season and the experience there may provide valuable clues about what may occur in the Northern Hemisphere this fall and winter.

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What Teachers Need to Know About Swine Flu in the Classroom

by Rose Garrett

Back to school season is full of preparation for teachers, from organizing lesson plans to prepping classrooms for the year ahead. But this fall, teachers are preparing for a new element in the classroom: the unpredictable threat of a swine flu epidemic.

Researchers are rushing to develop a swine flu vaccine, but the advent of flu season will likely outpace the release of an effective vaccine. "With a flu pandemic starting possibly in early to mid-September, and the protection through injection not available until December at the earliest, we have several months of coverage that we have to figure out how to get around," said Jerald Newberry, Executive Director of the NEA Health Information Network.

That means that teachers, as well as parents and school administrators, need to be on high alert during the notoriously hectic back to school season. Wondering how teachers can prepare? Here are 10 ways that teachers can ready classrooms and students for swine flu this fall:

1. **Wash Hands.** "The tools in our toolkit are fairly limited," said Newberry, but hand washing is still the best way to keep the flu virus from spreading. Teachers should encourage children to wash their hands frequently and thoroughly throughout the day, and should follow suit themselves. "Hand sanitizer would certainly not be a bad idea," added Anatoly Belilovsky, M.D., director of a pediatric practice in Brooklyn, NY.
2. **Keep Coughs and Sneezes Covered.** The flu virus is spread through droplets from sneezes and coughs, so students should be taught how to cover their mouths correctly, and teachers should model proper technique. Sneezing or coughing into your hands or a tissue is good, but it's even better to use the crook of your arm. Remember to always wash hands afterwards!
3. **Send Sick Students Home Immediately.** "There is some evidence that swine flu may be more virulent than the ordinary flu," said Joseph Bellanti, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Microbiology/Immunology at Georgetown Medical Center. However, he urges that people be sensible and follow the same protocol as with ordinary flu. "Body aches, fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose and headache" are all symptoms of the flu, said Bellanti, and indicate that students should be sent home as soon as possible.
4. **Give Allowances for Absenteeism.** Parents and students alike may feel pressure to avoid sick days, but sending kids to school with even a hint of flu symptoms is a dangerous idea. Teachers should stress that taking sick days when a child is actually sick is not only okay, it's imperative to prevent the spread of the illness. "Respect the parent's decision of when to send kids to school and when not to," urged Belilovsky. Make it clear that homework allowances will be given and student will have the opportunity to make up classwork when they return to school.
5. **Keep Classrooms Clean.** Surfaces such as desks and doorknobs get a lot of traffic in classrooms, and can be a magnet for germs. "Work with the school custodian to keep the room extra clean," advises Newberry, saying that teachers will likely need to take on more cleaning duties in the classroom.
6. **Experiment with Social Spacing.** The CDC recommends that teachers devise ways to keep

students further apart from one another, whether it means moving desks, holding classes outside, or otherwise experimenting with social distancing. However, Amy Garcia, President of the National Association of School Nurses, says social spacing may be a challenge this year due to increased over-crowding in classrooms. That means that teachers may need to get creative when it comes to keeping students a safe distance from one another.

7. **Be Aware of Your Own Health.** Teachers come into contact with scores of students every day. "There's a very good chance that some of our members will be exposed and many will get sick," said Newberry, of the NEA. Keep your immune system healthy by getting lots of sleep and taking vitamins, including vitamin D, and don't try to soldier on if you feel the beginnings of flu-like symptoms: go home and stay home until 24 hours after symptoms have disappeared.
8. **Develop Strategies for Homework.** "As much as possible, continue the lesson plan that's going on at school with homework assignments that students can do at home, and have makeup activities to help catch kids up," advised Newberry. Whether it's making class assignments and materials available online, or developing an action plan with parents for getting homework home, establish a system for getting materials to sick students before school starts.
9. **Stay Organized.** Teachers know how to stay organized, but keep in mind that substitute teachers may need to pick up mid-lesson if principle teachers get sick. Make sure that your lesson plans will be legible to a sub, and keep class materials centralized or filed in an organized fashion so that they will be easy to find and follow.
10. **Prepare an Info Packet for Parents.** Swine flu sounds scary, and it's easy for parents to panic without knowing all the facts. Prepare your students' families by putting together a packet full of information and recommendations, to be sent home on the first day of school or on back to school night. Be sure to include a list of flu symptoms, and tips for what to do if children get sick.

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10 Things Parents Need to Know About Swine Flu

by Danielle Wood

You've probably heard a lot about swine flu: how contagious it is, how it's expected to be bigger than ever this flu season, how it's been renamed "H1N1". On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a worldwide pandemic, and ever since, parents have been bracing for the impact.

Philip Tierno, Ph.D., director of Clinical Microbiology and Diagnostic Immunology at Tisch Hospital, New York University Medical Center, says it's time to take a big breath. "This is not a special flu," Tierno says. "The only thing special about it is that it happened off season, and spread like wildfire." Right now, H1N1 responds well to drugs.

That said, experts like Tierno are afraid that H1N1 may mutate and become more virulent. While there's no need for panic, every parent should take H1N1 seriously. Here are ten things all parents need to know and do to prepare for this new flu:

1. **Focus on the Obvious:** "Everything you need to know to keep your family safe, you learned in kindergarten," says Dr. Maurice A. Ramirez, a Senior Physician-Federal Medical Officer in the National Disaster Medical System, the founding chairperson of the American Board of Disaster Medicine, and a specialist in emergency and disaster response medical care. "Wash your hands. Take a nap - get plenty of rest. Keep your hands to yourself - don't share food or utensils, don't handle other people's food or let them handle yours. Sneeze or cough into your elbow."
2. **Teach Kids that Five Feet is the Magic Number:** Tierno knows germs. In fact, he wrote a book on the subject, *The Secret Life of Germs: Observations and Lessons from a Microbe Hunter*. His advice is to teach your kids to keep their distance from anyone who is coughing, sneezing, or sniffing, no matter how rude it may seem. "Stand 3-5 feet away from anyone who appears sick, especially when they're talking, coughing, or sneezing. That's a good safeguard until you can get out of there," Tierno says.
3. **Wipe Down Surfaces Regularly:** "It's not a secret where germs hide," says Tierno, "They congregate where people congregate." The most important thing parents can do to keep kids safe is to wash hands religiously. The second most important thing is "focused surface cleaning," he says. Wipe down the surfaces your family touches the most: the handle of the refrigerator, the handrail of the stairs, and the kitchen and bathroom counters, for example.
4. **Be Prepared to Take Time Off:** According to the WHO, we are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. "The reality is that in a real pandemic, 1 in 3 people has the disease or is at least a carrier," Ramirez says. That means that it's highly likely that you or someone you know will get sick. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says that kids can be contagious for as long as 10 days, but typically are most contagious from the day before they get sick to 5-7 days afterward. They caution parents to keep kids home for 7 days, and at least 24 hours once their fever is gone. Before the flu strikes your family, have a plan as to who will look after a sick child.
5. **Understand that Quarantine May be Necessary:** H1N1 is highly contagious. Tierno says the best way to keep the rest of the family safe is to sequester the child that's ill. "Confine them to a certain part of the home. If you have more than one bathroom, have them use only one. I hate to

say it, but masking is not uncalled for.” If possible, have only one adult visit and care for the sick child.

6. **Consider the H1N1 Vaccine:** A vaccine for H1N1 is in the works. According to the CDC, it may be available as early as October. To be effective, though, kids need two doses, spaced several weeks apart, so they will not be fully protected until late winter. Because the vaccines are being rushed to market, there will also not be that much time for testing them. Discuss with your partner how you feel about the H1N1 vaccine, so you’re prepared to act upon its release.
7. **Invest in a Can of Lysol:** Coughing, sneezing, and talking causes tiny droplets to fall to the ground by gravity, Tierno says. You can combat some of these germs with a can of Lysol with a high alcohol content. Spray it in the center of the room, in a circular motion. That’s a good weapon against something, like flu, that primarily spreads through the air.
8. **Keep Tabs on Your Child’s Friends:** One of the CDC’s prevention recommendations for school administrators is “social distancing”: moving desks further apart, dividing classes into smaller groups, holding classes outside or in larger classrooms, and taking other measures to limit each child’s proximity to someone who might be sick. Keeping your child home and locked in her bedroom is obviously over the top, but it makes sense to check with a friend’s parent before a play date to make sure no one in the household is sick, and to keep your child away from any family with cold symptoms. “If we have a deadly flu, everyone stays home,” Tierno says, “Social distancing will become extremely important and it will be enforced.”
9. **Avoid Public Transportation:** If at all possible, the CDC recommends skipping the school bus and public transit during the heart of H1N1 season. Tierno says that when he flies long distance, he wears a mask, “especially if I see someone five rows in front or three on either side who is sick. A mask shouldn’t be seen as so unfriendly. They’re extremely important and no one wants to talk about it.”
10. **Get the Facts Straight:** Although H1N1 is also known as swine flu, it cannot be transmitted by eating pork or spending time on a farm. It is also not transmitted through pool water. The main way H1N1 spreads is through person-to-person contact— usually by being near someone who is sick and is coughing, sneezing, or talking. “Swine flu parties” like the chicken pox parties you remember from childhood, may be all over the Web, but the CDC does not advise them.

You may be tired of hearing the old standard: wash hands regularly. But the truth is, “80% of all infectious diseases are transmitted by direct or indirect contact,” Tierno says, and “hands are the most important thing related to contact.” It may not be new and exciting advice, but it’s essential. Teach kids to wash their hands regularly with warm water, for 15-20 seconds. If water is not available, they can use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers. Teach them to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth, since germs spread this way.

Red Flags for H1N1:

If your child becomes sick with flu-like symptoms and experiences any of the following CDC warning signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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