

H1N1 Flu Precautions and Guidance

There has been a tremendous amount of media attention paid to the H1N1 (swine) flu. The State Department of Health estimates that while there are between 6,000 to 23,000 cases of the strain in Indiana, the vast majority of cases are less or no more severe than the typical seasonal flu. However, it is recognized that H1N1 has the potential to be a dynamic and changing event. In this respect, ZCS will follow the most current guidance from the Center for Disease Control, the Boone County Health Department, the Indiana State Department of Health, and the St. Vincent Emergency Health Coordinator. This guidance recognizes the need to balance the risks of illness among students and staff with the benefits of keeping students in school.

At present the direction from the local, state, and national health agencies is to take common preventable steps to control the onset and spread of the flu virus, monitor students for flu-like symptoms, and keep students who have a fever out of school until fever free for a minimum of 24 hours. Accordingly ZCS has the following steps in place:

- the routine sanitizing of desktops, doorknobs, switches, countertops, school bus seats, and other common areas where the virus can be spread;
- reinforcing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette;
- *the on-going monitoring of students for flu symptoms and referral to the school Health Center as warranted;
- The segregation of symptomatic students away from the school clinic and other students while awaiting parent pickup;
- continued coordination and communication with local and state health agencies as well as on-going consultation with St Vincent Health; and
- an identified means of efficient communication through SchoolConnects to alert parents of a change in flu severity or procedure.

***Based on current flu conditions, students with flu-like illness are requested to stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Symptoms of the flu are: fever, cough or sore throat.**

To follow is additional H1N1 information and sets of guidelines as set forth by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Background

The H1N1 flu virus is causing illness in infected persons in the United States and countries around the world. CDC expects that illnesses may continue for some time. As a result, you or people around you may become ill. If so, you need to recognize the symptoms and know what to do.

Symptoms

The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. The high risk groups for novel H1N1 flu are not known at this time, but it's possible that they may be the same as for seasonal influenza. People at higher risk of serious complications from seasonal flu include people age 65 years and older, children younger than 5 years old, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who are immunosuppressed (e.g., taking immunosuppressive medications, infected with HIV).

Guidelines for Families and School Personnel to Keep from Getting Sick and Spreading the Flu

Families, students, and school staff can keep from getting sick with the flu in three ways:

- **Practicing good hand hygiene.** Students and staff members should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- **Practicing respiratory etiquette.** The main way that the flu spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, so it's important to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands.
- **Staying home if you're sick.** Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

Students, staff, and their families must take personal responsibility for helping to slow the spread of the virus by practicing these steps to keep from getting sick with flu and protecting others from getting the flu.

Tips for Taking Care of Children (and other household members) with the Flu

- **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick

students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.

- **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Tips for Taking Care of High Risk Children with the Flu

- **Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child.
- **Keep your sick child at home** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor.
- **Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants, Pedialyte®) to keep from being dehydrated.
- **If your child has a fever, use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor** recommends based on your child's age. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- **Keep your sick child in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.

Links to additional information:

www.flu.gov

<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu>

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

<http://www.who.int/en/>