



September 2009

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT SEASONAL AND NOVEL H1N1 (SWINE) FLU

Dear Parent:

There are two types of influenza (flu) to be concerned about this year. The first type is the seasonal flu that happens every fall and winter. The second type is the novel H1N1 influenza virus that began causing illness in people last spring and has continued to occur in Michigan and throughout the world. The novel H1N1 influenza virus has caused mild to severe illness and hospitalizations in both adults and children. Children are most affected by it and are considered at high risk of infection. There are many things we can do to keep our schools, our communities, and our homes flu-free.

1. Get your child and yourself vaccinated against both seasonal and H1N1 flu.

- **There will be 2 different flu vaccines this fall. It is important to make sure children (and some adults) get both kinds. Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against novel H1N1 flu.**
- Seasonal flu vaccine is available in mid September and novel H1N1 flu vaccine will be available in late October. The CDC recommends both vaccines for all children 6 months through 18 years of age.
- Contact your health care provider or local health department to arrange for yourself, your child and other family members to be vaccinated.

2. Keep your child home if he/she is sick.

- Both types of flu viruses spread easily. If you suspect your child is getting or has the flu, it is important that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else such as: group childcare, the mall, or sporting events – where other people would be exposed to flu germs.

3. Teach your child how to reduce their risk of getting and spreading the flu viruses.

- Teach children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is best (that is about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
- Teach children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Throw the wipe in the trash after it is used.
- Teach children to cough or sneeze into their sleeve, **not** their hands! They should cover coughs and sneezes by coughing into the inside of their elbows.
- Teach children to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

School leaders, along with state and local health officials are closely monitoring the situation and will inform parents as soon as possible if school closures will occur. However, it is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to decide who would care for your child if his/her school were closed. If school is closed, it is important that students not gather together at another location, but rather stay home to avoid exposing other people.

Stay informed! Get the most up-to-date information from:

- Barry-Eaton District Health Department: www.barryeatonhealth.org
- The Michigan Department of Community Health: www.michigan.gov/flu
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/flu

Sincerely,

Nancy A. Hipskind, Ph.D.
Superintendent