



Mark Parkinson, Governor
Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT

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Division of Health

Dear Parents,

As you probably know by now, a new type of influenza (flu) is currently being seen in Kansas and throughout the United States. Because the novel H1N1 flu virus (referred to as “swine flu” early on) was not seen until earlier this year, no one has natural resistance against it. In a short time the virus has spread to more than 160 countries in every continent, and in June 2009, the World Health Organization declared that a pandemic – a global epidemic – had begun.

Fortunately, illness from this virus is usually mild and only lasts a few days; although in some cases severe disease and death can result. So far, most cases have occurred in children and young adults and some of those have needed hospitalization.

The symptoms of this flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu. They include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. People with other medical problems, and women who are pregnant, are at especially high risk of serious complications.

Schools can be easy places for flu viruses to spread. State and local public health officials are working closely with your school district now to take steps that will limit the spread of the pandemic virus. Parents must do their part to keep the virus out of Kansas schools, so that no schools are forced to close because of outbreaks of this infection.

Here is what your school needs you, and all parents, to do:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school or take them anywhere else, except to receive needed medical care. Ill children should stay home until they are fever free (without the use of fever-reducing medicine like Tylenol or Ibuprofen) for 24 hours or more.
- Plan for the possibility that you will be called to bring your child home from school if he or she gets sick while in school. Schools are setting aside special “sick rooms” for students who show signs of illness, until they are taken home.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and insist that your children do the same. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.

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- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing, and see that your children follow your example. Alcohol-based hand cleaners will also work. This year all schools will make sure that children have the time and places to wash their hands often during the school day.
- Remind children to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Make sure that your children practice other good health habits. See that they get plenty of sleep, get exercise, drink plenty of fluids, and eating healthy foods.
- Get your child vaccinated for seasonal flu soon. See that your child receives the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available in the fall.
- Stay informed. Watch for information from your child's school. Other resources can be found at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's special H1N1 flu webpage: <http://www.kdheks.gov/H1N1/index.htm>. More information can be found here: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you have questions about H1N1 flu, please contact your school nurse or family's usual healthcare provider. You can also get more information from your local public health department.

Thank you for working together with your school and your community to slow down the spread of pandemic flu in Kansas.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Eberhart-Phillips MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jason Eberhart-Phillips, MD, MPH
Kansas State Health Officer
Director of Health, KDHE