Help Prevent the Spread of Swine Influenza A/H1N1 in Your School or Center

Presented as a service to members of the Southern Early Childhood Association

The Southern Early Childhood Association is closely monitoring various agencies' evolving recommendations to schools and childcare centers about the steps they can take to prevent the spread of Swine Influenza A (H1N1). To make things easier for you, we have compiled information from a number of different organizations and made it all available to you in one convenient place.

Facts:
- Swine Flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza; although human infection is not common, people can and do contract the disease.
- The current strain is contagious and is spreading from human to human.
- The current virus that is spreading is a combination of human, avian, and swine influenza strains.
- You **cannot** contract the virus by eating pork products.
- Humans have no immunity to this strain and there is no vaccine available.
- Signs of swine flu infection include normal flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, diarrhea, and vomiting).
- Like the seasonal human flu virus, this strain can worsen existing medical conditions and can lead to pneumonia, respiratory failure, and death.

Current Status:
- The CDC currently reports 109 laboratory-confirmed cases in the United States in the following locations: New York City (50), California (14), Texas (26), South Carolina (10), Kansas (2), Massachusetts (2), Michigan (1), Arizona (1), Indiana (1), Nevada (1), and Ohio (1).
- As a result of the infection, 5 people have been hospitalized, including a 23-month-old Texas child who died Monday.
- 9 countries have officially reported 148 cases of swine influenza A/H1N1.
- At least 104 schools in more than 10 states have been closed, with approximately 56,000 students and 4,000 teachers having been affected by those closures. (These figures were given to us during a conference call with the CDC and the Department of Education; however, the particular states involved were not named.)

What You Can Do:
- Review your plans for responding to a pandemic. Update them if necessary and make sure parents know what they are.
- Remind parents and enforce policies for having ill children stay at home during their illness. In most areas, children with mild respiratory illnesses, including allergies, should be allowed to attend child care as long they are able to participate comfortably and their care does not result in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children (Caring for Our Children: Standard 3.065). Children with symptoms of an influenza-like illness should not come to school. Symptoms of swine influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and, in some cases, diarrhea. The child's health care provider will determine whether influenza testing is needed and when the child can return to child care.

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• Remind workers not to come to work while they have an influenza-like illness. They should consult their health care provider to determine whether influenza testing is needed.

• Health departments in areas affected by the swine flu outbreak may recommend more rigid exclusion policies so providers will need to stay informed on what is happening in their communities.

• Children with influenza may be infectious for up to 10 days after illness onset with influenza while adults are generally infectious for 5-7 days. If a child has been confirmed to have swine influenza, then seek the advice of the child’s health provider and the health department about when the child can return to the child care program. Review local and state plans for child care in the event of a pandemic. Go to www.childcareaware.org to search for plans by location. If these plans do not include specific approaches to communicate with and handle situations in child care, do what you can to advocate for updating the plans.

• If you don't already, start tracking illness and illness-related absences among children and staff. Keep track of the number of persons with various illnesses by day or, at the very least, by week. (see Caring for Our Children Standards 3.001 and 3.002 for information on how to do this (http://nrckids.org/CFOC/PDFVersion/Chapter%203.pdf page 2).

• Review and implement CDC Guidelines and Recommendations for Preventing the Spread of Influenza (the Flu) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff. Make sure staff are familiar with these guidelines.

• Remind child care staff to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the facility.

• Inform parents about steps they can take. Distribute the attached fact sheet to parents.

• Monitor the CDC website to see if child care facilities should begin preparing for possible closure or changes in operation.

• Work with parents to consult the child’s health provider if you have questions about a child with a respiratory illness or if you suspect a child might have influenza. Contact your child care health consultant or local public health department if you need help to make decisions promptly that affect the children as a group.

Although this new flu strain is causing a lot of anxiety and concern, we remind you that it is no more prevalent at this point than the strains of flu that occur during the regular flu season. We encourage you to be vigilant and use this information to protect yourself, your family, and your community. Remember that information is your best weapon against this spreading virus. Check with reliable news outlets and www.CDC.gov for the most up-to-date information. We will post important updates at www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org.

Sources:
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
World Health Organization
National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
www.PandemicFlu.gov
American Academy of Pediatrics
Flu Prevention Tips

Follow these steps to protect your family and community from a flu outbreak:

1. **Keep your distance** from people who are sick. If you are sick, protect those around you by limiting close contact.

2. **Stay home** from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children home.

3. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

4. **Wash your hands** and your children’s hands frequently to protect from germs. Wash long enough to sing “Happy Birthday”.

5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** You’re constantly touching contaminated surfaces; keep those germs out of your face.

6. **Be healthy!** Make sure you and your family get plenty of sleep and exercise, avoid stress, stay hydrated, and eat good-for-you foods.

7. **Seek medical attention** if you live in an affected area and develop flu-like symptoms (cough, runny nose, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea).

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Resources

- National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
  [www.NACCRRA.org](http://www.naccrra.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  [www.CDC.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- American Academy of Pediatrics
  [www.AAP.org](http://www.aap.org)
- [www.PandemicFlu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) (managed by DHHS)
- Department of Education
- World Health Organization
  [www.who.org](http://www.who.org)