

New Flu A H1N1 (previously called Swine Flu)—Child Care and Early Childhood Education (ECE) Provider Interim Guidance #1

Monday, May 4, 2009

Please note: This is a rapidly evolving situation. This alert provides interim guidance. Guidance may change in the upcoming days and weeks as more information becomes available.

Overview: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local public health officials in affected states including California, are investigating cases of illness caused by influenza A H1N1. The good news so far is that those with this virus in the United States have had only mild or moderate symptoms.

We recommend that instead of singling out children and/or families who have traveled to areas affected by the new virus, focus should be on everyday disease prevention practices. Child care and ECE programs should stress the importance of staying home when sick and adhere to the following advice.

Child Care and ECE providers should follow standard precautions for the H1N1 virus as they do for seasonal flu:

- Stay home from work or school if staff or children are sick
- Wash hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Avoid touching face (eyes, nose and mouth)

How to Lessen the Spread of Flu in Child Care and Early Childhood Education Settings

The CDC has developed information for child care providers on preventing flu, including this new virus. It is available online at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/childcare.htm. Some key points of this guidance include the following:

- Create or review program plans for operations in an emergency situation, including a pandemic.
- Inform and remind parents/guardians about policies for having sick children stay at home during their illness.
- Give information to parents/guardians on actions they can take to prevent flu (Distribute the attached fact sheet to each parent/guardian or post in the facility).
- Children and/or staff members with symptoms of a flu-like illness should not come to child care/early childhood education.
- If someone develops symptoms while at a child care/ECE program, follow standard policies and procedures to remove ill person(s) from contact with others. Monitor sick person and seek medical care if symptoms become more severe.
- Do not return to the child care/ECE setting until 1 or 2 days after symptoms end.

- Symptoms of flu include:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Body aches
 - Headache, chills, fatigue
 - Vomiting and diarrhea in some cases.

- In most areas, children with other mild illnesses including allergies may attend child care as long they are able to participate comfortably. Their care must not result in a need for more care than the staff can do without harming the health and safety of the other children (Caring for Our Children- Standard 3.065).

- Treatment with antivirals is usually only necessary for hospitalized persons and those with certain chronic health problems. Antibiotics are not effective. All medications should be taken under a health care provider's direction.

- Establish a system to track sickness and absences with children and staff (see attached sample tool).

Remember...children and/or staff members who are sick should stay at home until better—not just now, but always.

- Remind child care/ECE staff to clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared objects (toys, counters, utensils, etc.) often. The best way to avoid spreading germs does not include special cleaning procedures and/or chemicals beyond what is normally used.

- Keep at least three feet of space between children while napping or resting.

- Provide plenty of facial tissues, liquid soap and/or hand sanitizer, paper towels, and plastic trash liners for safe tissue disposal.

- Remind everyone to wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.

Remember... just keep doing what is normally expected of child care/ECE providers to prevent the spread of disease in group settings.

For More Information:

- United States:
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
 - www.cdc.gov/swineflu

- California:
 - California Department of Public Health
 - 1-888-865-0564
 - www.cdph.ca.gov

- Los Angeles County:
 - County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health
 - Call **2-1-1** from any phone
 - Please check frequently for latest updates: www.publichealth.lacounty.gov