

## **H1N1 virus (swine flu): Facts for families of school-age children (adapted from Public Health – Seattle & King County)**

### **What is H1N1 virus (swine flu)?**

H1N1 virus, also known as “swine flu” and “swine Influenza A” is a virus that spreads from infected people to others through coughs and sneezes. When people cough or sneeze, they spread germs through the air or onto surfaces that other people may touch. The virus now causing human illness is a new type of swine flu that spreads from person to person. Although this new virus is called “swine flu,” it is not spread from pigs to humans or from eating pork. People with H1N1 virus may spread the virus to others for about seven days after becoming sick.

### **Why have some schools closed?**

The Health District and some school districts in Snohomish County have closed schools where a student is ill with probable H1N1 (swine flu). School closures are part of the overall approach to prevent illness from spreading in communities. Even though most cases of H1N1 in the United States at this time involve only mild illness, flu spreads easily and it is too early to know how severe it may become.

The Health District knows that closures can create a burden on families. However, the health and safety of children are of top importance, so we are taking every safeguard. Thus, we acted with caution to reduce the spread of disease. As we learn more about how common and severe the virus is, we will review if closing schools continues to make sense. We value the sacrifices families are making to protect the health of the community.

### **What about before and after school programs?**

Before and after school programs are open when school is open. If a school closes, before and after school programs also close.

### **My child is healthy, but the school is closed. Now what?**

Children who attend a school that has closed should avoid group activities outside of school (such as play dates, sports, or other activities, etc.) during the week school is closed.

To avoid spreading illness, avoid bringing large groups of children together. If childcare centers or schools close, the U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) advises families to work together with two or three other families to provide care for a group of five or fewer children. CDC also suggests using the same caregivers each day to watch over the same group of children.

### **My child’s school is closed due to swine flu and my child is ill, what should I do?**

If the child’s symptoms are mild, she or he does not need to see a medical provider.

If symptoms are more severe, call your medical provider to see if you need to bring your child in for care. Remember to tell the provider that your child’s school is closed.

If your child is ill with a fever, cough or sore throat, he or she should stay away from others and stay home for seven days after the illness starts or for a full day after the illness is over, whichever is longer.

## What should we do if someone in the family has symptoms?

Whoever has symptoms should stay home from school or work and away from others. Staying home when sick stops the spread of the flu and helps you get well.

Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches, sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

Make the decision to see a health care provider as you would during a normal flu season.

If the following flu-like symptoms are mild, medical care is not required.

- Runny nose or nasal stuffiness
- Low-grade fever for less than 3 days
- Slight headache
- Body aches
- Slight stomach upset

If you have a high fever or a more severe cough, sore throat, body aches or are feeling very sick, check with your health care provider.

## How do I protect my children from getting influenza viruses?

Teach children to:

- **Wash hands often with soap and water.** Always do this after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not nearby, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes** with their elbow or a tissue. If they use a tissue, throw it away after use and have children wash their hands.
- **Not touch eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs can spread this way.
- **Stay away from people who are sick.**

## Where can I get more information?

- Call your child's school or school district for updates on school closures.
- Snohomish County call center, Mon – Fri 9am – 4pm, 425-388-5060
- Snohomish Health District web site, <http://www.snohd.org>