

District Health Department #10

Serving the counties of: Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason,
Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford Counties



September 18, 2009

Dear Educators,

We have received questions regarding when students and staff sick with flu-like symptoms should be sent home, and when they may return, to reduce the chances of spreading infection.

Symptoms of Flu

The symptoms of both H1N1 (swine) flu and seasonal flu are similar: fever >100 degrees, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. Both may cause a worsening of underlying medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes.

Symptoms of Other Common Infections

The above symptoms are specific to influenza and should not be confused with gastroenteritis or stomach flu that has vomiting and diarrhea as the prominent symptoms. A cold or other upper respiratory infection may or may not include fever. A strep throat begins with only the sore throat. Mono is associated with more vague symptoms of fatigue, sore throat, and enlarging lymph nodes.

When Students Should Stay Home (Or Be Sent Home) To Prevent Spread of Flu

If students present to or otherwise notify school staff that they have any symptoms of flu listed above, they should stay home or be sent home until recovered. Signs of a fever may include feeling warm to the touch, having a flushed appearance, or sweating or shivering.

When Students May Return To School After Flu-Like Illness

Students should stay home until their fever has been gone for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicines. Flu is most contagious from one day prior to symptoms through the fever stage. There is evidence that a recovered person can still shed the virus in decreasing amounts for up to a week, so it is still important to continue the hand washing and other personal hygiene habits that prevent the spread of any infection.

The CDC advises that if flu conditions become extremely severe in a community, it may be necessary to recommend sick children stay home for longer periods, and that you conduct active screening for flu symptoms. If this occurs, we will notify you at once. These measures are not necessary at this time.

Staff should follow the same guidelines as students for staying home during illness. This will help slow the spread of influenza among students and staff and, combined with regular environmental cleaning using customary methods, will help manage the impact of both seasonal and H1N1 influenza this year.

Please note that many school-related H1N1 flu materials may be found online at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/>, including a communication toolkit with fact sheets for teachers and parents and downloadable template letters in Word format.

Do not hesitate to let us know at any time if you need additional information related to influenza or any other infection prevention.

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