

Dear Parents and Employees of the Merrimack School District:

Every year, some people get sick with the “seasonal” flu during the fall and winter months. However, there is a new flu virus called swine influenza that is making people sick with the same symptoms as the seasonal flu: fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache and body aches (sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea).

It appears that this new swine influenza can be spread from person to person. You may have concerns, that this swine influenza virus has caused illness and death in some people in Mexico. As of April 30, 2009, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting 110 confirmed cases within the United States with 1 being in New Hampshire. It’s important for you to know that most people who have gotten sick in the United States have had very mild illness. However, this situation is evolving and we can expect that more cases will be identified.

At present, there is one case of swine influenza in New Hampshire (NH). We want to do all we can to try to prevent transmission within NH and within the school.

Actions you can take —

- **If you or your child has recently returned from an affected geographic area**, monitor for symptoms of influenza for seven days after returning. If symptoms occur, call your healthcare provider for evaluation (be sure to mention your recent travel history).
- **If you or your child is sick, stay home from work or school until you are better.** Keep sick people away from people who are not sick.
- **Tell your school nurse** or administrator about your child’s symptoms so they can watch for other students with the same symptoms.
- **Wash your hands well and often.** Make sure your children do the same. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **If you can’t wash with soap and water**, use a hand sanitizer. (Gels, rubs or hand wipes with at least 60% alcohol)
- **Remind children** to keep their hands away from their face – don’t touch mouth, nose, or eyes.

- **Cover your cough.** Teach your children to do the same. Cough into the inside of your elbow, or into a tissue — not your hands!
- **Throw away used tissues** or hand sanitizer wipes. Teach your children to throw away tissues and then wash hands.
- **Don't share** water bottles, utensils, cups, food, etc. with others.
- **If people in your home are sick** with the flu and cannot see a healthcare provider, care for them at home — Give plenty of liquids (clear fluids with electrolytes). If you are unsure what over-the-counter medications can be safely used to reduce symptoms, if the ill person is having difficulty breathing, or if they are getting worse, call a healthcare provider.
- **You can disinfect hard surfaces** in your home with a solution made of one ounce bleach to one gallon of water.

For now, school will stay open — At this time, the NH Department of Health and Human Services tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school, even students with history of travel to affected geographic areas as long as they don't have symptoms.

If the swine flu continues to spread in the U.S. and if it causes severe illness, closing of schools may be considered. The purpose of closing schools is to slow the spread of flu from person-to-person by keeping children at home and away from others.

It's important to keep informed about what's happening. You can get more information from:

- CDC website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu