

May 4, 2009

Dear parents,

This letter will give you information about the new “swine flu” identified in the United States and how that might affect us at the Acorn School.

Every year, some people get sick with “seasonal” flu during fall and winter months. As you may be aware, there is a new flu virus called swine influenza (H1N1) 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 spread from person to person. You may be concerned that this swine influenza virus has caused illness and death for some people in Mexico. As of May 4, 2009, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting 279 confirmed cases in the US. It’s important for you to know that most people who have gotten sick in the US have had very mild illness. The situation is evolving, however, and we can expect that more cases will be identified.

At present, there are 2 laboratory confirmed cases of swine influenza in New Hampshire (NH), as well as 1 in Maine, and 6 in Massachusetts. We want to do all we can to prevent transmission within NH and surrounding areas, and within the school.

#### **Actions you can take –**

- **If you or your child has recently returned from an affected geography,** 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** 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 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.

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 US and if it causes severe illness, closing of schools may be considered. The purpose of closing schools would be to slow the spread of flu from person to person by keeping children at home and away from others.

**If you have questions**, call your healthcare provider. You can call the school or visit its website for information.

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

- CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu)
- NH Department of Health and Human Services
  - [www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dhhs/dhhs\\_site/default.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dhhs/dhhs_site/default.htm)
  - NH Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Section: 603-271-4496
  - Swine influenza hotline: 1-888-330-6764
- The federal government keeps current information for individuals and families at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

Sincerely,

Sue Bendroth