



Swine-Origin Influenza A H1N1: Guidance for School, Childcare and After School Facilities in Boston

These recommendations are based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and may change as more information becomes available.

Preparedness

Review your institutions plans for responding to a public health emergency and make sure they are up to date. These plans should include strategies to address the following:

- Large number of faculty and staff absences due to personal illness
- Large number of employees and staff who may have to stay home if schools, childcare and after school programs dismiss students/children
- Dismissal of students including informing students about plans and procedures for providing and completing course work, and provide guidance to students and staff on continuing student instruction.
- Workplace and community social distancing measures
- Efficient communication with faculty, staff, students and parents/families

Education and Monitoring of Children and Staff

At this time, BPHC recommends that schools, childcare and after school settings increase education on respiratory hygiene and monitor attendees for acute febrile respiratory illness. Staff and children (as developmentally appropriate) should all be taught and asked to follow these steps that prevent the transmission of infections such as influenza and promote everyday preventive actions for children and staff:

- 1) Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm.
- 2) Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 15-20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- 3) Avoid close contact with sick people.
- 4) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

School or childcare participants with acute febrile respiratory illness, regardless of travel history, should be advised to stay home or be sent home according to established procedures with instructions to contact their primary care physician and stay at home for least 7 days after the onset of illness or until 24 hours after their symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. This period of exclusion can be shortened if it is found that the child is unlikely to have influenza, for example if an alternative diagnosis is made. The 7 day period of exclusion would *not* apply to a child with an isolated fever and no respiratory or influenza symptoms.

Recommendations to Decrease Swine-Origin Influenza A H1N1 in Boston Schools, Childcare and After School Settings

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) has issued the following recommendations regarding the control of Swine-Origin Influenza A H1N1 in Boston schools, childcare facilities, after school or similar settings:

Rather than closing individual schools based on the diagnosis of cases of swine-origin influenza A H1N1 in students or staff, BPHC recommends a policy focused on keeping all students with symptoms of influenza out of schools, childcare and after school settings during their period of illness and recuperation, when they are potentially infectious to others. In addition to the everyday preventive actions, we recommend institutions encourage students and staff to practice the following prevention measures to limit the spread of Swine-Origin Influenza A H1N1:

- 1) Each morning, all parents/caregivers should assess all family members and especially all school-age children for symptoms of influenza (fever plus cough, sore throat or runny nose) or other symptoms, such as vomiting or diarrhea.
- 2) Each morning all school/childcare/after school staff should assess themselves for symptoms of influenza.

Students or staff with influenza-like illness (fever plus cough or fever plus sore throat) should stay home and not attend school/childcare/after school. All sick students and staff with possible influenza should stay out of school/childcare/after school for at least 7 days even if their symptoms resolve sooner. Students and staff who are still sick at 7 days should continue to stay home from school/childcare/after school until at least 24 hours after they have completely recovered.

Persons who are ill should stay home and not go into the community unless they need medical care. Ill students should not attend alternative child care.

- 3) If a child or adult is ill with other symptoms, they should stay home at least one day to observe how the illness develops and until completely well for 24 hours.
- 4) Schools/childcare/after school should consider screening students and staff for visible signs of possible influenza illness upon arrival at school. Students and staff who appear ill at arrival or become ill at school should be promptly isolated and sent home.

School principals, school nurses, student health centers, and childcare/after school administrators should report higher than normal absenteeism and probable, suspected, and confirmed cases to BPHC at 617-534-5611.

Temporary School, Childcare and Facility Closures

The decision to temporarily close a school/childcare/after school would be made in conjunction with the Boston Public Health Commission. Temporary closure of a school, child care or after school facility should be strongly considered in schools/childcare/after school facilities if larger numbers of students or faculty become ill and school functioning becomes disrupted. If the decision to close a school/childcare/after school is made, the school/childcare/after school should dismiss all students and staff as soon as possible. *The criteria for school closure are based on national guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and may change as more information becomes available.*

Duration of Closing: The duration of closings for school/childcare/after school facilities should be for a time period to be determined based on ongoing epidemiological findings in Boston and the surrounding area. Facilities, in consultation with BPHC, should evaluate daily the need for possible extension of the dismissal/closure based on local influenza surveillance information, and the occurrence of new infections and severity of illness in the community from this virus. *These guidelines are based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and may change as more information becomes available.*

Disinfection Procedures: When schools/childcare/after school facilities re-open, keep commonly touched surfaces such as stairway railings, elevator buttons and door handles clean by wiping them down with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants that are usually used in the school setting. These products should be used according to directions on the product label. Additional, extensive cleaning of schools/childcare/after school facilities by wiping down floors and walls prior to reopening is not necessary as it is unknown whether this would be helpful in decrease the spread of influenza.

BPHC Investigation of Cases or Clusters of Illness

If a case is confirmed or if there is a cluster of illness in a school/childcare/after school, BPHC will initiate a public health investigation to identify persons who may be at risk and will work with the school/childcare/after school facility to take steps to minimize the spread of illness.

Isolation of cases and close contacts

Confirmed cases of H1N1 flu should stay at home. Close contacts of confirmed cases do not need to be isolated but should monitor themselves for symptoms of influenza-like illness and notify their medical provider if they develop symptoms. If close contacts of a confirmed case have underlying medical conditions or are healthcare workers, they should contact their healthcare provider to obtain post-exposure prophylaxis with antiviral medication.

Response to Dismissals

If the school dismisses students or a childcare/after school facility closes, they should also cancel all school, after school or childcare-related gatherings and encourage parents and students to avoid congregating outside of the school.

Students or Staff Returning from areas where Swine Origin Influenza A H1N1 has been confirmed

Individuals who have traveled to areas where confirmed cases of swine origin influenza A H1N1 have been identified should not be prevented from attending school UNLESS they have symptoms indicative of infection.

Additional Closings or Cancellations

Local school authorities, in consultation with BPHC, may make decisions regarding additional temporary school closures or the cancellation of other large gatherings such as graduations, school dances or other activities in the community based upon the extent of influenza like illness in the community.

School Closure Notification Process

BPHC is performing ongoing surveillance of all possible cases of swine origin influenza A H1N1. If there is a confirmed case or a suspect case linked to a confirmed case, BPHC will ensure that the school, child care or after school authorities are notified as soon as possible and will guide local authorities on steps to minimize the risk of spread of illness to others.

Disease Reporting and Consultation

School principals, school nurses, student health centers or other school or child care authorities in Boston should report suspected, probable, or confirmed cases of H1N1 flu or higher than normal absenteeism to BPHC at 617-534-5611.

Communication with Parents and Staff

There are important messages that you can share with your institutions and their staff to help prevent getting or spreading any type of influenza:

1. **Become aware of the facts.** We encourage everyone to visit the CDC's new web site at www.cdc.gov/swineflu, which provides excellent guidance on avoiding influenza and on how to care for a sick person at home. Please check the BPHC web site, www.bphc.org, for updates.
2. **Practice good health hygiene.** Disease transmission can be significantly reduced by taking the following actions:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
 - Practice good "cough etiquette" by coughing or sneezing into a tissue, or into your elbow instead of into your hands.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. This is an evolving situation and recommendations may change as more information becomes available. BPHC will continue to provide guidance as the situation changes. Thanks in advance for your patience and for your help in spreading the message about the importance of prevention.

For the most up-to-date information:

U.S. CDC Swine Influenza Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

Taking care of a sick person at home: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance_homecare.htm

Infection control and treatment guidance: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm>