

Action Steps for Schools to Prevent the Spread of Flu

Take the following steps to help keep students, teachers, and staff from getting sick with flu. These steps should be followed ALL the time and not only during a flu pandemic.

- ▶ **Educate and encourage students and staff to cover their mouth and nose** with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand rubs. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.
- ▶ **Remind teachers, staff, and students to practice good hand hygiene** and provide the time and supplies for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.
- ▶ **Send sick students, teachers, and staff home** and advise them and their families that sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- ▶ **Clean surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.
- ▶ **Move students, teachers, and staff to a separate room** if they become sick at school until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.
- ▶ **Have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks** available and ensure the equipment is worn by school nurses and other staff caring for sick people at school.
- ▶ **Encourage early medical evaluation for sick students and staff** at higher risk of complications from flu. People at high risk of flu complications who get sick will benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines. It is very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with flu and have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications. Other people may also be treated with antiviral drugs by their health care provider this season.
- ▶ **Stay in regular communication with local public health officials.**

If the flu conditions become MORE severe, schools should consider adding the following steps:

- ▶ **Extend the time sick students, teachers, or staff stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. Those who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.
- ▶ **Allow high-risk students, teachers, and staff to stay home.** These students, teachers, and staff should make this decision in consultation with their physician and/or health professional.



- ▶ **Conduct active fever and symptom screening** of students, teachers, and staff upon arrival at school. Any sick students, teacher, or staff should be separated from others, offered a surgical mask, and sent home.
- ▶ **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) at school such as rotating teachers between classrooms while keeping the same group of students in one classroom, moving desks farther apart, or postponing class trips.
- ▶ **Consider how and when to dismiss students** by working closely with your local and state public health officials. If you decide to dismiss all students, notify CDC and your state health and education agency by reporting a school or school district dismissal at www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- ▶ Review and revise existing pandemic plans and focus on protecting high-risk students, teachers, and staff.
- ▶ Update student, teacher, and staff contact information as well as emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Identify and establish points of contact with the local public health and education agencies.
- ▶ Develop a plan to cover key staff positions, such as the school nurse, when staff stay home because they are sick.
- ▶ Develop communication tools (e.g., letters to parents, Web site postings) that can be used to send sick students home, dismiss students, and to remind parents and staff how long sick students and staff should remain at home. Check out *Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Schools (Grades K-12)* for basic information and communication resources such as letters and flyers for parents. The toolkit is available at www.flu.gov.
- ▶ Review school policies and awards criteria to encourage social distancing and avoiding any incentives for students or staff to go to school when sick (e.g., cancel perfect attendance awards).
- ▶ Develop a school dismissal plan and options for how school work can be continued at home (e.g., homework packets, Web-based lessons, phone calls), if school is dismissed or students are sent home when sick.
- ▶ Collaborate with the local health department, community organizations, local businesses, and social services on a plan for flu response.
- ▶ Help families and communities understand the important roles they can play in reducing the spread of flu in schools.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov