



## SWINE FLU - KEY POINTS FROM THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Despite confirmed cases of swine flu in a private school in Queens, New York City, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open at this time.
- Even though most cases of swine flu in the United States at this time involve only mild illness, flu spreads easily.
- Therefore, it is essential that no student comes to school with flu-like symptoms.
  - Symptoms of flu-like illness include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, or runny nose. Some additional symptoms may be experienced with swine flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.
- If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs.
  - Students exhibiting symptoms will be dismissed from school following local protocols.
- Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.
- While the current situation does not warrant school closure, if swine flu continues to spread and more students become ill, it may become necessary for health officials to close schools for a period of time.
  - We are working with our school medical director and local health officials (county or city) to monitor the situation here and will make all decisions in consultation with them and state officials.
- The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.

- It is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to consider options in advance of the event of a school closing.
- Arrange for child care in other than a group day care setting.
- Parents can help protect their children and reduce the spread of seasonal or swine flu by taking the following precautions:
  - Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.) Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
  - Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
  - Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
  - Teach your children to dispose of used tissues properly.
  - Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick.
- This is an evolving situation. We are receiving support and information on a regular basis from the State Department of Health, State Education Department and State Emergency Management Office. We will keep you informed with up to date guidance as it becomes available. We will make public announcements through the media.

You may also get information at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [www.schoolhealthservicesny.com](http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com) or the 24 hour toll-free hotline that New Yorkers across the State can use to get answers to their questions. The hotline is 1-800-808-1987.