



## State of New Jersey

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

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JON S. CORZINE  
Governor

[www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health)

HEATHER HOWARD  
Commissioner

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

We understand that many people are concerned about the influenza A H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak. This is a new strain of flu virus that has not infected humans in the past. When a new flu virus begins infecting people, public health officials often take special measures to help slow the spread of the virus.

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families are in contact with child care centers and health departments, who will continue to communicate with staff, children and parents, and who will follow the same kinds of universal precautions that have helped us in the fight against seasonal flu and other viruses.

Please be assured that while H1N1 in New Jersey is cause for concern, at this point, there is no cause for alarm. Below are answers to some of the most frequently-asked questions:

#### **What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)?**

H1N1 flu (swine flu) is a type of flu virus that causes respiratory disease that can spread from person to person. Most people infected with this virus in the U.S. have had mild cases of the disease, but some have had more severe illness.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

In most children, the symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of regular flu. They include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Vomiting or diarrhea

#### **How do I know if my child has been exposed to H1N1 flu?**

**Children and adults are at risk if they come in contact with someone with the flu who is displaying the symptoms listed above.** The public health professionals in your school and daycare center, school nurses and local health officials in your community have been monitoring flu-like activity in their local districts and provide ongoing guidance to school leaders and parents. **If there is a risk at your school or child care center, public health officials will provide guidance for school personnel and parents.** Be sure to teach your children about how to avoid germs by always washing their hands. They should also be reminded to cover their mouths and noses whenever they sneeze or cough.

#### **Could my child just have allergies?**

Yes. One of the ways to tell the difference is that children with allergies sneeze and cough frequently but do not have fever and do not appear ill.

**Should I let my child care center know that he or she may have the flu?**

Yes. When you call in to advise the center of your child's absence, be sure to tell the person who answers the phone that you believe your child has flu-like symptoms. If the procedure in your center is to leave a message on an answering machine, be sure to include that information in your message.

**What should I do if my child is sick?**

- Unless they need medical attention, keep sick children home. **Do not send them to school or to the child care center.** Call your family doctor if you have questions.
- **Do NOT take your child to the emergency room for mild illness** including cough and fever. The emergency room should be used for serious illness. You do not want your child to spread illness or catch an illness while waiting.
- **Do take your child to the emergency room if the child is very sick.** A very sick child can have high fever, trouble breathing, asthma symptoms that are getting worse, severe nausea or vomiting, trouble keeping down any fluids or can appear too sleepy. Remember, if you have any questions, call your family doctor.
- Have your child drink lots of clear fluids, such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages (like Pedialyte®) to keep from becoming dehydrated.
- Keep the sick child comfortable. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, you can use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor may recommend based on your child's age. **DO NOT use aspirin with children or teenagers;** it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- If someone in your home is sick, keep him or her away from those who are not sick, in a separate room and away from other family members if possible.
- Keep tissues close to the sick person and have a trash bag within reach.
- Children who are sick with flu-like illness should stay home from school or the daycare center and stay away from other people for seven days after the onset of symptoms, or even longer if they still have symptoms. Do not bring sick children to stores, malls, movie theaters or other places where there are groups of people.

**How can my family and I keep from getting the flu?**

- Wash your hands and your children's hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (sing the ABC song or Happy Birthday twice!)
- Everyone should cough and sneeze into a tissue, sleeve or into the inside of their elbow.
- Stay away from people who are sick; if this cannot be done, try to maintain a distance of at least six feet.

**For Additional Information:**

Please visit the Department of Health and Senior Services website: <http://nj.gov/health>

The Department of Health and Senior Services has a toll-free hotline to answer questions from the general public and New Jersey health care providers. **The hotline number is 1-866-321-9571.**

Sincerely,



Kimberly S. Ricketts, Commissioner  
Department of Children and Families



Heather Howard, Commissioner  
Department of Health and Senior Services