

H1N1 (Swine) Flu Q&A

With the recent attention to the H1N1 flu (swine flu), Broadalbin-Perth is providing information to parents and community members seeking facts about this strain of flu virus.

The district is continually monitoring student and staff health and is in contact with the local County Departments of Health regarding protocols for those who have flu-like symptoms or upper-respiratory illness. We will continue to work with local and state officials, as well as monitor information from the Centers for Disease Control, to ensure the well-being of our school community. Please understand that this is an evolving situation and the district will provide updated information as it becomes available.

What is H1N1 (swine) flu?

H1N1 flu (earlier referred to as "swine flu") is a new influenza that is causing illness in people. It was first diagnosed in the United States in April 2009 and is thought to spread in much the same way that regular seasonal flu spreads—through coughing or sneezing by an infected person.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu in people?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu can vary in severity from mild to severe, and may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Should I keep my healthy children home from school as a precaution?

No. Parents do not need to keep otherwise healthy children home from school unless directed to do so by local school and health officials.

However, children who are ill should not attend school. Please monitor your child for influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea and keep your child home if he/she is sick. You may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if symptoms are severe.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 (swine) flu to others?

People with H1N1 flu infection should be considered potentially contagious for one day before getting sick to as long as seven days following illness onset. Children and people with weakened immune systems potentially could be contagious for longer periods.

Is there a vaccine against H1N1 (swine) flu?

CDC has begun development of a vaccine for H1N1 flu; it is expected to be available in fall 2009. As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against seasonal influenza.

What are strategies to protect against getting sick?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health and educate your children about these strategies:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into the crook of the elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. In order to kill germs, health officials recommend washing long enough to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. Use pf alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Additionally, avoid sharing personal items, such as drinks, food or unwashed utensils.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should I do if I or my children become ill?

If you or your children become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your health care provider particularly if you are worried about the symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you or your children are sick, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading illness to others. As a parent, it's recommended that you have a plan in place to care for your children if they become ill and must stay home.