



PIMA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION, SUITE 1340
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August 31, 2009

Dear Parents:

Together with your child's school, the Pima County Health Department is sending you information about the new H1N1 flu virus, also known as "swine flu". This letter will explain how this flu affects your children and their school and what you can do to help.

The good news is that this new flu does not seem to be more dangerous than the seasonal flu that occurs every year. We expect vaccine to be available for the new flu in late October, although only in small amounts at first. . When it arrives the priority groups for the new flu vaccine will be:

1. pregnant women
2. people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
3. health care and emergency medical services personnel
4. persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age
5. people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

These priority groups may be further narrowed at first since the vaccine supply will be limited. More information about the vaccine will be shared as it becomes available.

Please keep in mind that the vaccine for the new flu will not protect your child from the regular seasonal flu. However, there is a vaccine for the seasonal flu that is already available in our community. We encourage you to get your child vaccinated for seasonal flu as soon as possible. Some of the flu this winter will be ordinary seasonal flu and vaccination can help protect your child.

Your child's school will work with students on good hygiene and will monitor absences. We have asked your school to require sick children and staff to stay at home. Any student with flu-like illness of a fever of 100° F and a cough or sore throat **must** stay home until at least 24 hours after their fever has passed.

Please help us keep our community safe by teaching your children how to protect themselves and others from the flu and other germs. Take 5 minutes today and talk with your children about the following:

1. **Good hand-washing:** teach them to scrub their hands with warm water and soap for as long as it takes them to sing the "Happy Birthday" song or the "Alphabet". Children over 5 can also use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
2. **Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve – not in hands:** germs can spread easily when droplets of spit from a cough or sneeze land on your child's hands. Be sure to wash hands after using a tissue.
3. **Keeping hands away from eyes, noses and mouths:** the flu travels into the body through places like our eyes, nose and mouth. Teach your child to keep their hands away from these places.
4. **Above all, DO NOT send your child to school if sick.**

Children with high risk conditions may benefit from treatment for the flu. High risk conditions include:

- children under 5 years of age
- obesity
- a compromised immune system
- on chronic aspirin therapy
- a chronic disease

If your child has a high risk condition you should contact their health care provider as soon as you notice flu-like symptoms. Children without high risk conditions who have mild to moderate symptoms do not generally need to seek care. Staying home, managing their fever with non-aspirin medicines, drinking plenty of fluids, and resting will help them recover.

Anyone with severe symptoms should seek care at once. Severe symptoms for children can include:

- slow irregular breaths
- rapid heart beat
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- change in color, often with blue around the mouth and fingers
- dehydration
- change in mental status and may be irritable

We are all in this together. Helping your child follow simple hygiene measures will help prevent your family from becoming ill with the flu. For more information, I suggest visiting our web site at www.pimahealth.org or the CDC at www.cdc.gov/h1n1.

We thank you for your continued support and all of the hard work that has been done at the schools to help educate people about the flu and how to prevent its spread.

Sincerely,



Michelle McDonald, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer