



August 24, 2009

Dear Parent,

We are seeing an increase in flu-like symptoms related to the H1N1 virus in students from schools across Central Nebraska. The Central District Health Department is working with schools in Hall, Hamilton and Merrick Counties to monitor the activity of the virus in schools and the community.

A vaccine is currently in production that can help protect you and your child from the virus but it will not be ready for some time. You are encouraged to get your child vaccinated against the H1N1 virus once it is available. Since this is a new virus it appears to take two shots spread about three weeks apart to effectively immunize an individual.

The H1N1 flu (formerly known as swine flu) can cause a wide range of symptoms, including 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 in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Certain groups might be more likely to develop a severe illness from novel H1N1 flu infection, such as pregnant women and persons with chronic medical conditions. Sometimes bacterial infections may occur at the same time as or after infection with influenza viruses and lead to pneumonias, ear infections, or sinus infections. Most people who get the flu do not need to seek medical care and do not need to be tested for H1N1 flu.

There are steps you and your family can take prior to receiving a vaccination that will help minimize the spread of the virus in your home, in your school and in your community.

Steps you and your child can take now

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue. (If a tissue is used, throw the tissue away immediately).
- Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- **Keep children home from school if sick.** Children with flu-like illness should stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or

signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.

About 55 million students and 7 million staff attend the more than 130,000 public and private schools in the United States each day. By implementing these recommendations, schools and health officials can help protect one-fifth of the country's population from flu.

Information related to the H1N1 Flu is changing constantly. You can find additional information at the websites below.

Central District Health Department
www.cdhd.ne.gov

US Department of Health and Human Services
www.flu.gov

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Taking care of a sick person in home
http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

H1N1 Resources for Parents and Caregivers
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents/>

Stay Healthy!

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Hall, Hamilton, Merrick Counties