

Swine Flu FAQs For Schools & Daycare Centers

What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (also known as swine flu and H1N1) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Pigs are also known as “swine.” This new strain of virus is a mix of pig viruses with some human and bird viruses. Unlike more typical swine flu, it is spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms are similar to regular human flu: a fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have diarrhea and vomiting.

How is swine flu transmitted?

Flu viruses spread through uncovered coughs and sneezes and by individuals touching their nose or mouth with unwashed hands. Flu viruses can live on a surface for several hours, like a doorknob just touched by someone who had sneezed into his hand. Swine flu is not transmitted by food, so you cannot get swine flu from eating pork products.

Is there a vaccine against swine flu?

No, there is currently not a vaccine to protect individuals against swine flu.

Is swine flu treatable?

Yes, with drugs like Tamiflu and Relenza.

How can children and staff keep from spreading flu and other viruses?

Remind children and staff to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away after they use it.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not near by, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Stay healthy by getting plenty of sleep, drinking water and eating good food.

When should children and staff wash their hands?

Children and staff should wash their hands:

- Before meals or feedings.
- After wiping a nose or mouth.
- After touching objects such as tissues or surfaces soiled with saliva or nose drainage.
- After diaper changes.
- Before preparing or eating food.
- After going to the bathroom or helping someone with toileting.
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick.
- After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing.
- After handling an animal or animal waste.
- After handling garbage.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.

- When hands are visibly soiled using soap and water (not sanitizer).

The correct way to wash hands with soap and water is as follows:

- Wet hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if possible.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds. Imagine singing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use paper towel to turn off the faucet and open nearby doors.

What if soap and water are not available?

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and remember to:

- Avoid using the sanitizer on the sensitive skin of infants and toddlers.
- Keep the sanitizer out of the reach of children to prevent unsupervised use.
- Clean hands by applying product to the palm of one hand, rubbing hands together and rubbing the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

How can staff help children who might be ill?

- Observe closely all infants and children for symptoms of respiratory illness. Notify a parent if a child develops a fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F orally, or 102°F rectally) or chills, cough, sore throat, headache or muscle aches. (For children 4 months or younger, the lower rectal temperature of 101°F or under the arm of 100°F is considered a fever threshold). Send the child home, if possible, and advise the parent to contact the child's doctor.
- If a child has difficulty breathing, is lethargic, or appears to be worsening rapidly, consider calling a physician or 911 in addition to notifying a parent.

What should staff tell parents of sick children?

Staff should encourage parents of sick children to keep their child home and away from the school or childcare setting until the child has been without fever for 24 hours, to prevent spreading illness to others.

What else can we do to help protect our children?

Teachers, aides and administrative staff who are ill should stay home.

For more information about swine flu, visit www.dekalbhealth.net.

For more information, contact: DeKalb County Board of Health (404) 294-3829 or visit www.dekalbhealth.net.