

Information on Swine Influenza for the St. Francis Preparatory School

- Background Information on swine influenza (flu)
- What to do if you are sick
- Where to get more information

As you are aware, a number of students at St. Francis Preparatory School have recently experienced a respiratory infection, and some have been diagnosed with swine influenza. The New York City Health Department (DOHMH) is working closely with your school's administration to ensure that measures are in place to provide you with up-to-date information on how to protect yourself from infection, and what to do if you or members of your family feel that you may have become infected.

BACKGROUND

Influenza can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes on you. It is also possible to become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touching your own nose or mouth. So far, all infections with swine influenza in the United States have been mild and all the people who got sick have recovered or are recovering.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK

The most important thing for you to do if you have symptoms of a mild respiratory infection is to **stay home**. If you develop a fever with a sore throat or a cough, you may have swine influenza. During the period that you have symptoms, especially fever, it is possible for you to spread the virus to those who have close contact with you (for example, someone living with or caring for you). To help prevent transmission of influenza virus to your close contacts, please stay at home and follow these guidelines for 7 days after the day you developed a fever, or at least 24-48 hours after all symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

YOU SHOULD:

Stay at home for 7 days after the first day of fever or at least 24-48 hours after all symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

- Contact with others should be limited as much as possible; avoid close contact such as kissing, do not share toothbrushes, cigarettes or drinks with non-infected persons. Persons living in the home with you should limit contact with you to the extent possible; consider designating one person (not someone who is pregnant) as the primary person who will care for the sick person.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose – and remember to wash your hands after throwing the used tissue in the garbage. Throw out your used tissues with your regular garbage.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- While the virus is likely not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, if any of your body fluids (such as secretions from your nose or mouth, urine, vomit or stool) gets on surfaces in your home (such as door knobs or any other object that you sneeze or cough on), the surface should be washed with any standard household cleaner or disinfectant. Rinse the surface with tap water afterwards, and be sure to wash your hands after cleaning the area.
- Dirty dishes and eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap. Separation of eating utensils for use by a patient with influenza is not necessary.
- Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry used by a patient with influenza from other household laundry.

YOUR CLOSE CONTACTS SHOULD:

- Other household members should monitor themselves closely for the development of influenza-like symptoms. If they get sick with fever, cough, or sore throat, they should stay at home and take the same precautions listed here.
- You should not have visitors while you are ill with influenza or an influenza-like illness. If anyone who does not live with you must enter the home, they should avoid close contact with you.
- Your close contacts may consider using a facemask (e.g. surgical mask) or an N95 respirator. These can be purchased at a pharmacy or hardware store. If a reusable fabric facemask is used, it should be laundered with normal laundry detergent and tumble-dried in a hot dryer.

IF I AM SICK DO I NEED TO TAKE MEDICINE?

Right now the Health Department is not recommending that people with mild illness must take any special medication for swine flu. You should rest, drink plenty of liquids, and can take medications that you would normally take to treat your symptoms, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. People who are under 18 years of age should NOT take aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g., Peptobismol), as this can cause a rare serious illness called Reye's Syndrome.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SYMPTOMS WORSEN

If your mild symptoms worsen, for example you develop difficulty breathing; you should seek medical attention, preferably at an emergency room. **If you need to go to the doctor's office or emergency room, you should have a family member or friend drive you in a private car if at all possible, or take a taxi. Do NOT take public transportation (subway or bus).** If you go to your doctor, please contact your doctor before you leave your home and tell the doctor you have influenza-like symptoms. You should go straight to the receptionist or triage nurse when you arrive and tell them that you are associated with the school and feeling sick so that you can be put in a private room while you wait to see the doctor. Try to sit away from others as much as possible.

If you are very sick and need to call an ambulance to take you to the hospital, let the 911 operator know that you are associated with the school and have influenza-like symptoms, and let the ambulance crew know when they arrive.

IF I AM NOT SICK BUT LIVE WITH A SICK PERSON SHOULD I TAKE MEDICINE TO PREVENT SWINE FLU?

At this time the Health Department is recommending preventive medication particularly for household or other close contacts who have an underlying condition (such as certain chronic medical conditions, being immunocompromised, being <2 or > 65 years old) that may put you at risk for more severe illness. To find out whether you should take preventive medication such as oseltamivir (tamiflu), call your own doctor.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For more information, call your doctor or visit the following websites that have information about swine flu:

www.cdc.gov

www.who.int

www.nyc.gov/health or call 311