



# New Hampshire Health Alert Network

## Health.Alert@nh.gov

**Status:** Actual  
**Severity:** Moderate  
**Message Type:** Alert  
**Sensitive:** Not Sensitive  
**Message Identifier:** NH-HAN #20090820 H1N1 School Guidance K-12  
**Delivery Time:** 12 hours  
**Acknowledgement:** No  
**Originating Agency:** NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

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**DATE:** August 20, 2009

**TIME:** 3:30 PM EDT

**TO:** NH School Nurses and Administrators, DPHS Management Team, DPHS Investigation Team, DPHS Outbreak Team

**FROM:** José T. Montero, MD, Director of the NH Division of Public Health Services

**SUBJECT** Guidance on H1N1 for Elementary and Secondary Schools  
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### **Guidance on H1N1 for Elementary and Secondary Schools** **August 19, 2009**

NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) recommends:

- **Identify ill students and staff as early and quickly as possible.**
- **Send home any ill student or staff. They should stay at home until they have no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.**
- **Continue to encourage good hygiene, which is crucial to preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses.**

#### Students and Staff

- Maintain general health and hygiene activities in your school. Instruct and remind all students and staff about careful hand washing (and/or use of alcohol hand gel) and the importance of coughing and sneezing into the elbow. In addition, remind everyone not to share drinking containers or utensils.
- Soap and paper towels (and/or hand gel) should be readily available and kept well stocked. Frequently touched surfaces (including desks and keyboards) should be regularly cleaned.
- Any student or staff presenting with influenza-like illness [fever (>100°F) and/or cough or sore throat] should be dismissed. They should be instructed to contact their health care provider initially by phone or email to report illness, particularly if they have any underlying medical conditions.
- Ill students and staff should only leave home in case of emergency or to seek medical attention (i.e., clinic visit, pharmacy pickup) and they should wear a face mask while out. If a face mask is not available, tissues or a handkerchief should be used to cover all coughs and sneezes. Ill students and staff should avoid spending time in public places (such as shopping centers or parks) or in others homes because this increases the risk of transmitting illness.

- It is recommended that students and staff who have recovered from illness can return to school 24 hours after their fever has resolved (without the use of antifever medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen). Most people with H1N1 infection in the spring of 2009 had a fever lasting from 2-4 days, requiring them to be out of school/work for 3-5 days.
- School nurses should report higher than normal absenteeism to NH DHHS Communicable Disease Section 603-271-4496. Early planning should include identification of a school “sick room” without much traffic where ill students and staff can be kept until they are able to leave school. It is recommended that ill students and staff wear a facemask when in contact with others, and all staff caring for these individuals should use appropriate personal protective equipment. For information on personal protective equipment, please refer to the most current H1N1 Clinical Guidelines at <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDCS/han.htm>.
- We do not currently recommend canceling any events or closing any schools given the existing ongoing community spread of H1N1 and the negative consequences of school dismissal. This recommendation may change as we monitor progression of H1N1 in our communities this fall. We recommend consulting with NH DHHS Communicable Disease Section at 603-271-4496 before considering any actions outside of your standard protocols.
- Consider using the attached parent letter template as an informational tool.

#### Household Contacts of Symptomatic Students and Staff

- Household contacts should:
  1. remain home if they develop symptoms of illness;
  2. minimize contact in the community to the extent possible;
  3. designate a single household family member as the ill person’s caregiver to minimize transmissions to asymptomatic persons.
- Additional resources are available for those caring for someone who is ill at [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm) and for those who have developed flu-like symptoms at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>

For the purposes of this document, “schools” refer to both public and private institutions providing K-12 education to children and/or adolescents in group settings.

This document is consistent with the recommendations provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/technicalreport.htm>

For daily updates on the outbreak and other published interim guidance, please reference the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

**Please refer to the NH DHHS website at [http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/DHHS\\_SITE/swineflu.htm](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/swineflu.htm) more information.**

**For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please contact the NH DHHS Communicable Disease Control and Surveillance Section at 603-271-4496 (after hours 1-800-852-3345 ext.5300).**

**Attachment: Sample Parent Letter**

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS AND ALERTING VOCABULARY

### Message Type

- Alert: Indicates an original alert
- Update: Indicates prior alert has been updated and superseded
- Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled
- Error: Indicates prior alert has been retracted

### Status

- Actual: Communication or alert refers to a live event
- Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
- Test: Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded

### Severity

- Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property
- Severe: Significant threat to life or property
- Moderate: Possible threat to life or property
- Minor: Minimal threat to life or property
- Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

### Sensitive

- Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
- Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

**Message Identifier:** A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation.

**Delivery Time:** Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert.

**Acknowledgement:** Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required.

**Originating Agency:** A guaranteed unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

**Alerting Program:** The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

**You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification database.**

**If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would prefer to be used please contact:**

**Denise M. Krol, MS**  
NH HAN Coordinator  
[Denise.Krol@dhhs.state.nh.us](mailto:Denise.Krol@dhhs.state.nh.us)

**Business Hours 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM**  
Tel: 603-271-4596  
Fax: 603-271-0545

Dear Parent,

We are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in [*School name*]. As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. We want to keep the school open during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

We are working closely with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Control Section to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools. We will keep you updated with new information when it becomes available.

For now we are doing everything we can to keep our school functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or utensils.
- **Teach your children to cover up their coughs or sneezes** using their elbow, instead of their hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected. Any child determined to be sick while at school will be sent home.

For more information, [*see the attached flyer/additional information and*] and visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu.

For more information about flu in our community and what our school is doing, visit [*school/health department website or phone*] or call Communicable Disease Control Section at the Division of Public Health Services (603) 271-4496 and speak to the Public Health Professional on call if you have specific influenza related questions.

We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu.

Sincerely,

[*School administrator's name and signature*]