



## **Parents' Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How does the Health Department monitor H1N1 in local schools?**

The Kane County Health Department closely monitors the impact of H1N1 flu on school age children by tracking daily absences at public schools due to Influenza-Like Illness (ILI).

### **What is an Influenza-Like Illness (ILI)?**

Influenza - Like Illness is defined as a fever over 100 degrees with cough and/or sore throat.

### **If my child has the above symptoms will they be tested for H1N1 flu?**

That is up to your medical provider to decide. In most cases testing for influenza (rapid screening or testing to determine H1N1) is not indicated in the outpatient setting as it does not change the way in which the medical provider will manage your child's care. Also, a negative test result does not exclude infection with influenza.

### **It seem like a lot of children are sick right now. Should I keep my kids home?**

There are more residents with flu-like symptoms than usual for this time of year both across the country and here in Kane County. If your child has flu-like symptoms, they should stay home 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.

If your child does NOT have these symptoms it is recommended that you send children to school. Influenza is circulating throughout the community not just in school settings. However, if you child is at high risk for complications from the flu you may want to consult with your physician for a recommendation

### **Will my child's school be closed if someone has H1N1 flu?**

No. Unlike in the spring, one case of H1N1 flu in a school where most of the students are not at a high risk for flu complications is not reason to close the school.

### **Under what circumstances would the Health Department recommend a school be closed?**

There are some schools where the number of students with an Influenza-like Illness exceeds 5% of the total student body. In this situation, the Kane County Health Department provides consultation and guidance to public and private schools based on the Centers for Disease



Control and Prevention's recommendations which can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools>.

*Key points from the recommendations include:*

The decision to dismiss students is made locally and balances the goal of reducing the number of people who become seriously ill from influenza with the goal of minimizing disruption and safety risks to children sometimes associated with school dismissal.

The length of time schools should be dismissed will vary depending on the type of dismissal as well as the severity and extent of illness.

Schools that dismiss students should do so for five to seven calendar days and should reassess whether or not to resume classes after that period.

Schools that dismiss students should remain open to teachers and staff so they can continue to provide instruction through other means.

Dismissals might be appropriate when schools are not able to maintain normal functioning. For example, when a significant number and proportion of students have documented fever while at school despite recommendations to keep ill children home.

Dismissals can be used proactively to decrease the spread of flu. CDC may recommend preemptive school dismissals if the flu starts to cause severe disease in a significantly larger proportion of those affected. *This has not yet happened.*

### **While schools remain open, how can children stay healthy?**

Children should wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).

School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary.

### **What if my child is at high risk for flu complications?**

Parents with children at high-risk of flu complications should talk to their doctor about staying home from school when a lot of flu is circulating in the community. Schools should plan now for ways to continue educating students who stay home through instructional phone calls, homework packets, internet lessons, and other approaches.



People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths. People at high risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases.

For more information please visit: [www.kanehealth.com/parents](http://www.kanehealth.com/parents)