



Recommendations for Parents during H1N1 Outbreak

Based on current information on how the H1N1 (swine) flu virus is circulating in the world, in the U.S., and in Kane County, **parents are really important in helping to slow down and interrupt the spread of the H1Ni virus** which is new and has an evolving transmission pattern.

1. Parents need to observe for symptoms.

Children are very susceptible to getting this new virus, therefore parents need to observe carefully for the symptoms of H1N1 virus which are similar to ordinary flu virus: The symptoms of this new H1N1 virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Also, like seasonal flu, severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

2. Parents need to seek medical advice and care for their children who have symptoms of illness in accord with that advice.

If the symptoms of the child are mild, call the doctor first. If the symptoms are more severe, seek immediate medical care: In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include: *Fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish or gray skin color; not drinking enough fluids; not waking up or not interacting; being so irritable that the child does not want to be held; flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough; fever with a rash.*

3. Parents need to keep their ill children home and away from others, except for medical care.

Keep your child home until he has been symptom-free for 24 hours. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.

4. Parents of ill children can do household cleaning to prevent the spread of influenza virus.

To prevent the spread of influenza virus it is important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label. Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Linens (such as bed sheets and towels) should be washed by using household laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. Individuals should avoid "hugging" laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating themselves. Individuals should wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub immediately after handling dirty laundry. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.

5. **Parents need to understand how the virus spreads and do things that help to prevent its spread.** Spread of this H1N1 virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.
6. **Parents can take actions to help protect themselves and others in their family and community from getting sick.**

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against the H1N1 virus. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

 - a. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - b. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
 - c. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - d. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Parents are vital partners in slowing and stopping the spread of the H1N1 flu virus in Kane County! The Kane County Health Department will continue to keep parents informed and up-to-date as information and data continue to evolve.

9-2-09