

HISTORY AND FAST FACTS OF H1N1

The Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS), under the leadership of Dr. Humayun Chaudhry, has collaborated with the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association (SCSSA) to communicate a clear and consistent message regarding the H1N1 virus and believe it is important that everyone know the facts and practice some simple precautions.

On June 11th 2009, the World Health Organization announced that the outbreak of H1N1 Flu (*Swine Flu*) had reached pandemic proportions. While new discoveries are being made, there is a great deal more known now about this disease than was known a few short months ago.

In the United States and Canada, the symptoms have been similar to the usual seasonal influenza symptoms. In the U.S., patients have experienced symptoms of an influenza-like illness including fever, cough and/or sore throat lasting for about a week. Some also experienced vomiting and diarrhea.

H1N1 is not spread by pigs and you cannot catch H1N1 by eating pork or using medications that are derived from pigs. Recent travel to affected areas is important only if you left those areas less than four days before becoming ill. H1N1 has an incubation period of 1 to 4 days.

The information that appears in this brochure was current at the time of printing.



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H1N1 INFLUENZA A

What You Need to
Know About the Flu



**Suffolk County
School Superintendents Association**

2009 - 2010

What We Know...

- Unlike the seasonal flu, **H1N1** began in the early spring rather than early fall.
- Unlike the seasonal flu which recedes at the end of its cycle, **H1N1** has not “gone away”.
- Although relatively mild, **H1N1** is highly transmissible.
- Transmission occurs through sneezing and coughing.
- The average age of **H1N1** cases in Suffolk County and the nation is 12 years.
- The incubation period is one to four days and you are contagious one day before symptoms are present.
- You are most contagious during the first three days of illness **with fever**.
- Influenza-like illness is defined as a fever of 100 degrees and a cough or sore throat. Infants will exhibit fever and lethargy with or without a cough.
- Vomiting and diarrhea may occur in an **H1N1** illness, whereas it is unusual in seasonal flu.
- Symptoms last seven days in adults and ten or more days in children.
- As of September 2009 the **H1N1** virus has not mutated.
- The vaccine will be available for distribution October 2009.



Risk Factors...

- **H1N1** is more severe in patients with chronic medical conditions such as:
 - *Chronic respiratory disease that requires regular medication*
 - *Significant cardiovascular disease (not hypertension)*
 - *Immuno-compromised due to treatment or disease*
 - *Diabetes mellitus*
- Parents of children with underlying health conditions should consult their physicians.

What the SCDHS recommends...

- Hand hygiene is a must to reduce the spread of **H1N1**.
- Hand hygiene includes traditional hand washing with soap and warm water for a minimum of 20 seconds or with the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- “Respiratory etiquette” must be taught, modeled, and practiced. Coughs and sneezes should be covered with a tissue that is disposed of properly. If no tissue is available, using the inside of the elbow (or shirtsleeve) to cover the mouth or nose is preferable to using the hands.
- Always wash hands after handling soiled tissues.
- Stay home if you or your child is sick and drink plenty of fluids.
- At the first sign of symptoms – fever, cough or sore throat – keep your child at home until they are free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are taking antiviral drugs.
- Do not go to the hospital emergency room unless your child is very sick.
- Contact your own physician if you have questions or concerns.

What the SCDHS Recommends to School Districts...

- *Monitor high-risk staff and students who have underlying health issues.*
- *Teach, model and use appropriate hand-washing and “respiratory etiquette” techniques.*
- *Continue routine cleaning techniques. “Sanitizing” schools will have no additional benefit.*

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

www.co.suffolk.ny.us/departments/healthservices.aspx

www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm

www.health.state.ny.us

www.flu.gov

RESOURCES

- Suffolk County Department of Health Services website:
(www.co.suffolk.ny.us/departments/healthservices.aspx)
- New York State Department of Health website:
(www.health.state.ny.us)
- Town Hall Meeting at C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, September 3, 2009
- Joint meeting of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services and the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association, at Eastern Suffolk Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Holbrook, New York, September 3, 2009.