

## H1N1 (Swine Flu) & Other Flu-Like Viruses Preparedness Update

September 1, 2009

Dear Parents,

It is apparent that flu viruses, as well as other illnesses, will be a part of our new school year. Georgia health officials, as well as the Centers for Disease Control, report that there are higher than normal occurrences of flu-related symptoms affecting school-aged children in communities throughout the state.

These statements are not intended to cause alarm but rather assure you that our school system has been following the statewide and national situation and is communicating with medical professionals to get the most up-to-date information and infection control recommendations.

Although H1N1 remains a concern, public health officials have downgraded the initial alarm about the virus. In Georgia, health care providers are no longer testing every case specifically for this strain of flu. Therefore, we will not always know if a sick student has been affected by the H1N1 virus as opposed to the seasonal flu.

However, current health care guidelines now call for the H1N1 virus and the seasonal flu virus to be treated and handled in basically the same manner (*see side column*). Health care providers also are prescribing anti-viral medications less frequently, preferring that the virus run its course naturally. Most cases – whether H1N1 or the seasonal flu – last 3-5 days and are mild.

Our goal is to keep schools open and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. While the virus has not been as severe as initially expected, we are prepared to take additional steps, if necessary, to prevent its spread, such as:

- Conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school,
- Making changes to increase the space between people, such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips, and
- Dismissing students from school for several days if they become sick.

### **Facts about Flu Viruses (H1N1 and Seasonal Flu)**

#### **General Symptoms:**

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Extreme fatigue

#### **How is it spread?**

Typically the flu spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People also become infected when the virus gets on their hands and they rub their eyes or nose.

#### **If you think your child has the flu:**

- Make sure he/she gets plenty of rest
- Encourage him or her to drink plenty of caffeine-free liquids to avoid dehydration
- Give non-aspirin pain relievers to reduce fever
- Keep the child home from school until they no longer have symptoms and are fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Contact your health care provider if you have questions about the illness

**Children exhibiting flu-like symptoms will be sent home from school.**

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/sanitizer.** You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.** If a tissue is unavailable, covering their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand is encouraged.
- **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 symptoms of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs.** Keeping children who have symptoms and or those with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home.** It is acceptable for siblings and others in contact with those who have a confirmed flu virus to attend school as long as they are not actively experiencing flu-like symptoms. Also, students who have fully recovered at home do not need a doctor's note to return to school.
- **Have your family vaccinated against the seasonal flu.** If, and when applicable, also get vaccinated against the H1N1 virus.

We will continue to keep you informed by notifying you of any modifications to our school district's flu prevention strategy. Any updates will be posted to our web site at [www.fultonschools.org](http://www.fultonschools.org). For additional about H1N1, please visit the web sites below or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Sincerely,

Cindy Loe, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

#### Flu Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)
- Georgia Department of Community Health: [www.dch.georgia.gov](http://www.dch.georgia.gov)
- GDCH's Division of Public Health: [www.health.state.ga.us](http://www.health.state.ga.us)
- Georgia Consumer Healthcare Info: [www.georgiahealthinfo.gov](http://www.georgiahealthinfo.gov)