

Communications Team

401 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 1300
Seattle, WA 98104-1818

206-296-4600 Fax 206-296-0166
TTY Relay: 711

www.kingcounty.gov/health

Swine flu: Facts for families of school-age children

What is swine flu (H1N1)?

H1N1 virus, also known as “swine flu,” is a virus that can spread from people who are infected to others through coughs and sneezes. When people cough or sneeze, they spread germs through the air or onto surfaces that other people may touch. People with swine flu are thought to be able to spread the infection to others for approximately 7 days after becoming sick. H1N1 virus is not transmitted from pigs to humans or from eating pork products.

What should we do if someone in my family has symptoms?

Stay home if you have flu symptoms: fever and cough or sore throat, sometimes with runny or stuffy nose, body aches, vomiting or diarrhea.

Please stay away from others until you are better for at least one day so you won't infect people around you. Make the decision to see a health care provider as you would during a typical flu season. Do not seek medical care if you are not ill or have mild symptoms for which you would not ordinarily seek medical care. If you have more severe symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, body aches or are feeling more seriously ill, call your health care provider to discuss your symptoms and if you need to be evaluated.

If the following flu-like symptoms are mild, **medical attention is not typically required.**

- Runny nose or nasal stuffiness
- Low-grade fever for less than 3 days
- Mild headache
- Body aches
- Mild stomach upset

Why did some schools close?

At the onset of this outbreak of a previously unknown influenza virus, we believed it prudent to close affected schools while we learned more about the characteristics of this new illness and the strategy for community measures to prevent illness. The closures were intended to decrease spread of infection in the schools and have provided valuable time for us to gather information about this new H1N1 influenza strain in our community. We appreciate the sacrifices families and schools have made to protect the health of the community during this early stage of the outbreak.

Will schools continue to close?

Schools will no longer be routinely ordered closed by Public Health on the basis of a diagnosis of a single probable or confirmed cases of H1N1 virus (swine flu). As is our practice with seasonal influenza, schools may be closed if larger numbers of students or faculty become ill. School closure appear less necessary at this point in the outbreak given what we are observing about the spread of disease and the severity of illness currently associated with this H1N1 strain. As the illness becomes more common in the community, closing individual schools based on reports of one or two diagnosed cases is less effective as a control measure.

My child is healthy but the school is closed. Now what?

To avoid spreading infection, children who attend a school that has closed should avoid gathering or participating in group settings outside of school (play dates, sports, or other extracurricular activities, etc.) during while the school is closed. If your child does not develop symptoms, you do not need to see a healthcare provider.

What are the best options for child care if my child's school is closed?

To avoid spreading illness, avoid bringing large groups of children together. If childcare centers or schools close, the U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) advises families to work together with two or three other families to provide care for a group of five or fewer children. CDC also suggests using the same caregivers each day to watch over the same group of children.

My child's school is closed due to swine flu and my child is ill, what should I do?

If your child is ill with a fever, cough or sore throat, he or she should avoid contact with others and remain at home for 7 days after the illness starts or for a full day after the illness is over, whichever is longer.

If the child's symptoms are mild, she or he does not need to see a health care provider.

If symptoms are more severe, call your health care provider to discuss if you need to bring your child for evaluation. Remember to tell your healthcare provider about the school closure for a swine flu case.

My child's school has reopened but my child just became ill, what should I do?

When school re-opens, students and staff with fever, cough or sore throat or other new respiratory illness **should not attend school** for 7 days after the illness starts or for a full day after the illness is over, whichever is longer.

How do I protect my children from infection?

Teach children to:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not nearby, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue or the crook of your elbow when you cough or sneeze. If you use a tissue, throw it away after you use it and wash your hands.
- **Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way.
- **Stay away from people who are sick.**

Where can I get more information?

Contact your child's school for school closure updates.

Call the Flu Hotline, 877-903-5464, TTY Relay: 711, 9 am - 5 pm, (M - F), interpreters available.

Additional information and updates on swine flu are available on the following websites:

- Public Health – Seattle & King County: www.kingcounty.gov/health/H1N1
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/swineflu