



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT SEASONAL AND 2009 INFLUENZA A H1N1 (SWINE) FLU

Dear Parent:

There are two types of influenza (flu) to be concerned about this year. The first type is the seasonal flu that happens every fall and winter. Every year in the United States, on average 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu; more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and; about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes.

The second type is the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) virus that began causing illness in people last spring and has continued to occur in Michigan and throughout the world this summer. The 2009 influenza A (H1N1) influenza virus has caused mild to severe illness and hospitalizations in both adults and children. Children are one of the groups that have been most affected by this virus and are considered at high risk of infection. There are many things we can do to keep our schools, our communities, and our homes flu-free.

### 1. Get your child and yourself vaccinated against both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu.

- Vaccination is the single best way to protect your child and family from both types of influenza.
- Flu vaccination is both safe and effective.
- **There will be 2 different flu vaccines this fall. It is important to make sure children (and some adults) get both kinds. Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against 2009 H1N1 flu.**
- Seasonal flu vaccine is available now and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine will be offered later this fall.
- CDC recommends seasonal flu vaccine for the following groups:
  - All children aged 6 months through 18 years
  - Pregnant women
  - Persons aged 19 through 49 years with a medical condition that puts them at higher risk
  - Adults aged 50 years and older
  - Healthcare personnel
  - Persons living with or caring for children birth through 4 years, adults over 49 years and those with a medical risk condition
  - Residents of long-term care facilities
- CDC recommends the first doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine for the following groups:
  - Persons aged 6 months through 24 years
  - Pregnant women
  - Persons aged 25 through 64 years with a medical condition that puts them at higher risk
  - Healthcare personnel
  - People who live with or care for children under 6 months of age
- Contact your health care provider or local health department to arrange for yourself, your child and other family members to be vaccinated.

### 2. Keep your child home if he/she is sick.

- Influenza viruses spread easily. If you suspect your child is getting or has the flu, it is important that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs.

### 3. Teach your child how to reduce their risk of getting and spreading flu viruses.

- Teach children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is best (that is about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
- Teach children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Throw the wipe in the trash after it is used.

- Teach children to cough or sneeze into their sleeve—not their hands! They should cover coughs and sneezes by coughing into the inside of their elbows.
- Teach children to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread easily this way.

School leaders, along with state and local health officials, are closely monitoring the situation and will inform parents as soon as possible if school closures will occur. However, it is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to decide who would care for your child if his/her school is closed. If school is closed, it is important that students not gather together at another location, but rather stay home to avoid getting and spreading the flu.

Stay informed! Get the most up-to-date information from:

- Your local health department
- The Michigan Department of Community Health: [www.michigan.gov/flu](http://www.michigan.gov/flu)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)