



Frequently Asked Questions regarding H1N1 novel virus (swine flu)

May 5, 2009

In response to updated guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health regarding the H1N1 novel virus (swine flu) in the state of Minnesota, Mounds View Public Schools would like to answer some of the most frequently asked questions regarding the health of our students, staff and our school community. *We're providing the following information as a communication service for those who wish to learn more, not as a signal to alarm families of an anticipated outbreak.*

What has the state learned about the H1N1 virus?

The virus appears to be acting like seasonal influenza in terms of severity of illness and transmission of infection. Also, it is not possible to identify every case of novel influenza because the symptoms are similar to those of other acute respiratory infections. Complicating this further is the fact that other acute viral respiratory infections are circulating in Minnesota. Therefore, the Department of Health recommends keeping all students and staff with symptoms of influenza out of school in order to decrease transmission of infection to others.

Could Mounds View Public Schools close?

In the earliest days following confirmed cases of H1N1 in Minnesota, the Department of Health believed it was prudent to close affected schools. Over the past week, the Department of Health has stated the virus appears to be acting like typical seasonal influenza. The Department of Health told school districts this week that it's no longer necessary to close schools if the new H1N1 virus is discovered among students or staff. However, school closings in Mounds View Public Schools still could occur at the discretion of school district officials in consultation with public health agencies if large numbers of students or staff become ill or if school functioning is disrupted in any way.

How would I learn if schools were closed?

In the event of a school closing, the District would notify parents through its Mounds View Messaging voicemail and e-mail service. News would also be posted on the District's web site at www.moundsvIEWSchools.org and on cable access Channel 20. If a school were closed, all after-school and evening activities (including Community Education) would be cancelled at the involved school and off-campus.

How can parents help?

State and local public health agencies recommend that all members of the school community – staff, parents and students continue take an active role to limit the spread of infection and identify students or staff with influenza-like illness, in particular looking for respiratory symptoms associated with fever.

When notifying school of an absence for illness, parents are encouraged to indicate whether the illness includes fever (100° F or greater) and recent onset of at least one of the following: runny nose or nasal congestion, sore throat or cough.

How can I learn more?

- Contact your primary health care provider.
- Call the Department of Health hotline 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at 1-800-657-3903 or visit online at www.health.state.mn.us
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/swineflu
- What is influenza? Download a fact sheet at www.moundsvIEWSchools.org
- For information related to your specific student or school, you may contact Nancy Haugen, MS, RN, Lead School Nurse, Mounds View Public Schools, 651-621-6875, nancy.haugen@moundsvIEWSchools.org