

Elkhorn Public Schools Precautions and Procedures for H1N1

New cases of H1N1 are being reported in schools and throughout the community almost daily. We want to assure you that we are taking appropriate precautions. Health officials affirm that there will be many cases in our community and schools. Please monitor your student for signs of illness and connect with your health care provider if you have any questions.

Due to the expected number of cases, we will not be sharing with parents every time a new case is reported. However, if we have a large number of students absent from one particular school or a particular class or we have any reason to be alarmed we will certainly share information with parents. Additional precautions and procedures are summarized below.

1. Stay home when sick: Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. A wide-range of symptoms have been identified with 2009 H1N1, which may include a: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue and possibly diarrhea and vomiting.

Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness are sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. Masks are being distributed by the Nebraska Department of Health and the Douglas County Health Department to schools. Upon arrival, surgical masks will be provided to students and staff who are waiting, in an isolated area, to go home when they are not feeling well. Masks are used to reduce the spread of the disease by containing the spread of germs from a potentially infected individual into the environment.

2. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette: The new recommendations emphasize the importance of the basic foundations of influenza prevention: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).

Additionally, all Elkhorn Public School personnel are emphasizing the importance of hygiene, especially hand washing as part of our education on this issue. The District has placed additional signage in all buildings, encouraging proper hand washing techniques. Hand sanitizing stations are provided for students in the lunchroom.

3. Routine cleaning: School staff are routinely cleaning areas that students and staff touch often, such as door knobs, student desks and office areas used to isolate students who are not feeling well.

4. Consideration of selective school dismissal: Determination to close a

school will be made in conjunction with the Douglas County Department of Health. The Douglas County Health Department is monitoring the status of H1N1 in our community. In addition, the Elkhorn Public School District reports to this agency weekly the number of students and staff who are out ill.

5. Individuals of high risk: An individual who is considered to be at high risk, thus very susceptible to the H1N1 virus should expect exposure both in and out of school and should visit with his/her health provider for any special instructions. Those considered to be high-risk by the Center for Disease Control include individuals who have the following:

- Pregnancy
- Asthma, Diabetes, Immune-compromised
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or Cardiovascular disease
- Chronic lung disease, severe cerebral palsy
- Neurocognitive disorders, Neuromuscular disorders
- Seizure disorders
- Frail individuals compromised in ability to mobilize respiratory secretions

6. What You Can Do to Stay Healthy: Everyday actions people can take to stay healthy include the following:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes you to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.) Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to reduce the spread of germs. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- In order to keep all our students healthy, it’s important to remember that if your child has a fever, he or she must stay home and cannot return until fever-free for 24 hours, without fever reducing medicine.
- Consider getting the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available, in addition to the seasonal flu vaccine.

7. For more information about the H1N1 virus visit the following websites:

- Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu> or www.flu.gov or http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination_qa_public.htm
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/H1N1flu/>
- Douglas County Department of Health: <http://www.co.douglas.ne.us/dept/health/>