



## **H1N1 Questions & Answers for Parents of Children in Child Care**

Since April 2009, the new influenza virus called H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) has caused illnesses in people throughout North Carolina and the United States. This virus has continued to spread worldwide, in much the same way that other flu viruses spread from person-to-person during coughing or sneezing. In anticipation of more cases of H1N1 influenza occurring in our community and among children this fall, please review the following information provided by the Durham County Health Department:

### **What are the signs and symptoms of this virus?**

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to those of seasonal flu (that people get every fall or winter) and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some persons who have been infected with this virus have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

### **What should I do if my child gets sick with an influenza-like illness?**

He or she should stay home and **not** go to daycare or into the community (except to seek medical care or for other necessities) for at least 24 hours after fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Most children recover from the flu quickly without treatment, but those with medical conditions (asthma for example) should call a doctor for an evaluation and to receive antiviral medications as soon as possible. As recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children who are sent to daycare and appear to have an influenza-like illness should be promptly separated from other children and sent home to prevent spread to others. Do not send a child who is sick or previously sick with an influenza-like illness to another childcare program.

### **Do children who were out sick with an influenza-like illness need a note to return to daycare?**

No, but they should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Although children are less infectious after the fever goes away, they should be encouraged to cover their noses when coughing or sneezing, and to wash their hands often.

### **What should I do to prepare for H1N1 in my child’s daycare facility this year?**

Identify an alternate person who can be with your child if your child gets sick and you can’t miss work. Provide updated emergency contact information to your childcare provider.

### **What can I do to prevent my child from getting H1N1?**

Get your child vaccinated with both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 vaccines that will likely become available this fall. Although vaccine protection isn’t 100%, these vaccines can lessen the chances of getting either seasonal flu or H1N1 flu, which will be difficult to tell apart if he or she gets sick. Also, discuss the following general key messages with your child, depending on his or her age:

- Cover his or her nose and mouth with a tissue (or use their elbows) when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue in the trash after using it.
- Wash his or her hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice for example), especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching his or her eyes, nose or mouth during the day. Try to avoid close contact with other children who look sick.

*Durham County Health Department, H1N1 Information Line 919-560-7882, [www.durhamcountync.gov](http://www.durhamcountync.gov)*

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