

# INFORMATION ON H1N1 INFLUENZA

## Q&A FOR PARENTS

### **WHAT IS H1N1 INFLUENZA?**

H1N1 flu is a respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses that regularly cause outbreaks in pigs. There have been reports of serious illness and deaths due to H1N1 flu in Mexico, but the recently confirmed cases in the United States have been mild.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF H1N1 INFLUENZA?**

H1N1 flu symptoms are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, lethargy, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu.

### **IS H1N1 INFLUENZA TREATABLE?**

Yes. Antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). It is particularly important for people who have severe illness and for those with underlying illness (such as diabetes, heart, or lung disease) to be treated.

### **HOW DOES H1N1 INFLUENZA SPREAD?**

H1N1 flu viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human-to-human transmission is also possible, and appears to be occurring with this outbreak. Spread is mainly through coughing or sneezing. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY FROM H1N1 FLU?**

Here are the best ways to avoid getting or spreading H1N1 influenza:

- Encourage all people to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.

These are the same protections as those for seasonal flu and many other respiratory infections.

### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF A STUDENT BECOMES ILL?**

The student should be evaluated by the nurse. If the nurse believes that the student may have influenza, the child should be separated from other students and sent home. The student should not take the school bus. Students with symptoms of flu should not return to school until they have been symptom-free for 1 to 2 days.

### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF A SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HAS FLU SYMPTOMS?**

The person should go home and not return to school until 1-2 days after they become symptom free.