

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – Victoria

For all schools, principals and regional staff

S312-2009 H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) Hygiene, health and wellbeing, 25 June update

Main Points

- Victoria has moved to the 'Protect' phase of the national pandemic plan.
- This illness is classified as 'moderate', with the majority of cases being mild. However five per cent of cases are severe, which means that those affected may require hospitalisation and intensive care.
- The best defence against all influenza viruses – including H1N1 – is good general hygiene.
- Students and staff with flu-like symptoms should stay at home and limit close contact with others, especially children, and seek medical advice, where necessary. On advice from a doctor, quarantine will be limited to confirmed cases of the virus. These people and their contacts will not be given antiviral therapy unless it is clinically indicated.
- Students arriving in Australia from countries of high prevalence are no longer required to be kept away from school for seven days following their arrival in Australia.

Children unwell at school

- During the winter season many children will have coughs and colds that are mild and are not the flu. These children do not need to be sent home
- Schools must contact the parent of a student who is unwell with flu-like symptoms (e.g. fever) and make arrangements for the child to be collected from school. This particularly applies to students that may have special health care needs (including chronic respiratory conditions, compromised immune system, chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, and neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy and, spina bifida).
- Children becoming ill at school with flu-like symptoms are to be removed from their class and cared for separately until they are collected by their parents. Staff should ensure that appropriate hygiene practices are taken when attending to these children and that infection control processes are in place. This includes hand washing, distancing and tissues for coughing and sneezing.
- Parents should be advised to seek medical advice if their child is unwell with flu-like symptoms, particularly if the child has special health needs.

School community wellbeing

- While the majority of the cases of the virus are mild, many parents (and children) may naturally be feeling anxious.
- It is important that parents and children have factual information. The Victorian Government Department of Human Services is continually providing the community with information via their website: <http://humanswineflu.health.vic.gov.au>
- When discussing H1N1 with parents, children or staff members, listen to what they are saying. Be guided by their questions. Answer questions they may have simply and honestly. Don't be afraid to say you don't know but reassure them that you will find out the answer to their question where possible.

Actions Required

- Schools to continue to reinforce good hygiene practices with students and the school community
- Schools to continue to review their provision of basic hygiene products for students and staff and provide these products if not already available
- Children who show any signs of flu-like illness should be removed from their class and arrangements made with their parents to them to be sent home.

Additional Information

- School-related queries or concerns can be directed to the DEECD Incident Coordination Centre – 1800 059 866 – Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm (closed public holidays)
- Specific health queries about H1N1 Influenza can be directed to any of the following:
- The Swine Influenza Hotline Tel. 180 2007
- Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Your doctor (GP) – if you have a moderate flu-like illness
- Your local hospital – if you are seriously unwell with flu-like symptoms.

Peter Dawkins
Secretary

Dr Sharon Goldfeld
Principal Medical Advisor