



FACT SHEET (Rev. 7/09)

Novel H1N1 Flu: Efficient Utilization of School Resources

Utilization of school resources during a flu outbreak can be conducted efficiently given the facts about the disease and how it is contracted. The following guidelines for efficient utilization of school resources may be considered in the event of a Novel H1N1 Flu outbreak.

Here are the facts:

Novel H1N1 Flu spreads from an ill person to others mainly through coughing or sneezing. To prevent the spread of influenza, it is most important to: avoid close contact with people who are sick; cover your cough or sneeze with the crook of your elbow or a tissue; wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze; and try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth since germs often spread this way.

Efficient Utilization of School Resources Guidelines:

- 1. Nursing Surveillance.** Infectious disease surveillance is integral to the school nurse role. Early identification of influenza illnesses and outbreaks by school nurses can help limit the spread of the disease. School nurses can also conduct assessments of illnesses within families of symptomatic students.
- 2. Isolation.** Students, faculty and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home.
- 3. Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces to Help Prevent the spread of Novel H1N1 Flu Virus.** Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface. By the time students and staff come to the school in the morning, influenza virus on surfaces from the day before would no longer be infectious. In light of this fact, it does not make sense to close a school for the purpose of cleaning when influenza cases are detected among staff and students. Instead, schools should continue to clean and disinfect the school buildings according to the regularly followed schedule. Routinely used disinfectants are effective in inactivating the virus. For more information on novel H1N1 flu, visit the Department of Public Health's Web site at <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch>.
- 4. Alcohol-based Sanitizers.** If soap and water are not readily available for frequent hand washing, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- 5. Disposable Cups.** Provide disposable cups for usage at water fountains.

6. Communication. Decisions about school closure are at the discretion of local authorities based on local considerations, including public concern and the impact of school absenteeism and staffing shortages; therefore, school administrators should communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain guidance about reporting of influenza-like illnesses in schools.

7. Plan. Update your School's Emergency Preparedness Plan. Know who your public health officials are and how to contact them.

Content source:

- Connecticut Department of Public Health Web site:
http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/lib/ctfluwatch/cleaning_schools.pdf.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site:
http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/K12_dismissal.htm.
- National Association of School Nurses Web site:
http://www.nasn.org/Portals/0/resources/h1n1_preparedness_tips_for_school_nurse.pdf.

Federal Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.hhs.gov>.

State Resource:

- Connecticut Department of Public Health: <http://www.ct.gov>.