

Bulletin

Mansfield City Schools Focused on Student Learning: Building Tomorrow's Dreams

What is novel H1N1 influenza?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This virus was first detected in people in the United States in April, 2009. Novel H1N1 virus is spreading from person-to-person in the same ways that regular seasonal influenza spreads.

What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza in people?

Novel H1N1 influenza symptoms are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. A significant number of people also have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with this virus.

Where can I get information on the status of novel H1N1 flu in Mansfield City Schools?

As information is made available concerning H1N1 or to alert you of an outbreak in our district the public can go to www.tygerpride.com for immediate updates.

Is it safe for a child to attend school?

There is no reason to keep healthy children at home. If a child has fever or a respiratory illness they should be kept home from school until they have recovered and are fever free (for 24 hours without medication). Ill students may need to be seen by a health care provider.

What if someone in the community or school has been confirmed with H1N1? Is my student at risk? There is no vaccine available for distribution to the general public at this time to protect against the H1N1 virus. Consider protecting yourself and family as soon as a vaccine becomes available to the general public. The best measures everyone can take to protect themselves, their family, coworkers and community is to practice preventative measures such as:

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

These are the same protections as those for seasonal flu.

If a student becomes infected with the H1N1 virus should I keep my children home?

There is no reason to keep healthy children at home. If a child has fever or a respiratory illness they should be kept home from school until they have recovered (fever free for 24 hours without medication). Ill students may need to be seen by a health care provider.

How is the school district dealing with a child who has a fever of 100 degrees or more?

Children who appear ill will go to the nurse's office or main office be examined as they do with any other suspected illness. If a child has fever of more than 100 degrees, a parent or guardian will be called to come pick up the child. The student should be kept home from school until they have recovered. Children need to be fever free (without medication) for 24 hours before they can return to school. Ill students may need to be seen by a health care provider. The school district remains in on-going contact with our local, state and federal health partners monitoring the situation. Any change in the status of schools will be communicated directly to parents and the public on the district's website.

How is the school district informing parents of confirmed cases of H1N1?

There are no confirmed cases of H1N1 in Mansfield City Schools. The district will continue to communicate updated information to parents in the form of a letter sent home to parents and information posted to the district's website at www.tygerpride.com

Will the school vaccinate children, students and staff against H1N1?

Right now there is no vaccine available for distribution to protect against the H1N1 virus. The district remains in constant contact with our local, state and federal health partners and will keep our school district and community informed when the vaccine is provided and how it may be distributed. For now, the Centers for Disease Control is recommending everyone get the seasonal flu vaccine.

How does novel H1N1 influenza spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 flu virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What happens if a student appears to be sick?

The student should be evaluated by a school nurse or other school staff. Parents should maintain the child at home until they have been afebrile (without fever) for 24 hours. We will request a note from the parent or health care provider, and document the absence accordingly.

How is MCS Preparing for a Potential novel H1N1 outbreak?

Mansfield City Schools (MCS), in collaboration with our public health partners, will respond to any potential epidemic. The district is working closely with the Richland County Public Health Department and the Ohio Department of Health to monitor and to communicate on a regular basis. MCS continues to have heightened disease awareness, and is providing on-going education and communication with staff, students and parents regarding health concerns related to H1N1.

What actions is the district taking to decrease the spread of H1N1?

Mansfield City Schools remains diligent in its standard procedures for cleaning horizontal surface areas where germs could be found with hospital/institutional-grade disinfectant; school personnel are reinforcing with students proper hygiene practices such as frequent hand washing, sneezing and coughing into the crook/elbow and properly disposing of tissues; and students and staff members who feel ill are being encouraged to be evaluated by a nurse or health care provider. MCS is also closely monitoring student and staff illness/absenteeism to determine if further action is needed.

What if my child or I become ill?

Anyone who becomes ill with flu-like symptoms should not leave home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including: work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings. Stay hydrated, get lots of rest, properly dispose of tissues, cover your cough, wash your hands, and wash contaminated surfaces. Monitor symptoms for warning signs of serious illness. Contact your healthcare provider.

When should I seek medical care?

Seek medical care any time that you are concerned about symptoms. However, if you or your child experiences any of the following signs, seek care immediately:

- In children, emergency warning signs include:
- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not alert and interacting

- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medications that keep flu viruses from reproducing in your body. During the current outbreak, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs is to treat severe influenza illness.

References:

Centers for Disease Control <http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ga.htm>
Richland County Public Health <http://www.richlandhealth.org>
Ohio Department of Health <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/>.