

Flu Prevention and Response

Snohomish School District

The health of our children is very important to all of us. The H1N1 (“swine flu”) virus that first appeared last spring has typically consisted of influenza-like illness - fever and respiratory tract illness (cough, sore throat, runny nose), headache, muscle aches - and (more rarely) vomiting and diarrhea.

H1N1 flu has symptoms that are currently similar in severity to the usual seasonal flu but seems to be more easily transmitted, especially in school age children. There may, therefore, be widespread outbreaks of H1N1 that involve a higher than normal percentage of the school population.

The Washington State Department of Health, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, local health agencies, and school districts around the state are working together to prepare for the potential impact of the flu on families and schools. We’re tracking and monitoring the flu very closely this year. And we want to make sure you have the information you need to understand and get ready for the flu season. It will take all of us working together to ensure healthy schools for our students and staff.

Here’s what you can do:

Teach children the importance of good hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

- ✓ **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after coughing or sneezing. While soap and water are best (especially for children), alcohol-based cleaners are also effective.
- ✓ **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder – not into your hands.
- ✓ **Do not share drinks or utensils.**

Keep sick family members home. One of the most important things you can do to stop the spread of germs is keep children at home if they’re sick. Children should stay home from school at least 24 hours after their fever has passed (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Sore throat, body aches, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or a temperature of 100-F or higher are reasons to keep your child home.

Have a plan in place. Have activities for your children to do while at home. Talk with your employer about what you will need to do if your child is ill. If staying home is not possible, plan for other ways to care for your children at home. Families around the country are creating “childcare co-ops” with trusted friends and family to share the responsibility of caring for sick children.

If you have children with asthma, diabetes, or other medical conditions that put them at higher risk, talk to your health care provider about their needs during the flu season.

Flu prevention and response, what you can do; continued:

Follow vaccination guidelines. Talk with your physician about what is right for your family, especially if you or someone in your family is of child-bearing age.

Make sure your contact information is correct. Students who have flu-like symptoms will be sent home immediately. Please be sure we know who to contact if your student becomes ill at school, and have a plan in place to be able to pick them up quickly.

Here's what we will do:

We will maintain a clean environment. Along with general cleaning, top custodial priorities include the daily cleaning and sanitizing of restroom facilities, door handles and other high-contact areas, such as elevators, buttons for automatic doors and stairway handrails. Custodians went through an intensive training before school started to remind everyone of what is most critical to maintaining a healthy building. Additional precautions are in place for our student athletes involved in contact sports, including the disinfection of mats before and after each practice and competition, the exclusion of students with flu-like symptoms, and instructions for keeping gear clean.

We will send sick children home. Any child with flu-like symptoms will be evaluated, separated from other students, and sent home immediately.

We will teach and model healthy practices. Our teachers and nurses routinely emphasize frequent hand-washing, covering coughs / sneezes, and not sharing drinks or utensils.

We work closely with health agencies. We have good working relationships with our local health agencies. We will continue to work closely with them to get and follow the most current guidance from the Department of Health and the CDC. We are closely monitoring student and staff absenteeism and follow Health Department guidelines for reporting illnesses.

In the event it becomes necessary to dismiss (temporarily close) any of our schools to minimize the spread of the flu, we will work closely with local health officials to make that decision.

We will keep you informed. We will continue to keep families informed of pertinent health information and decisions through parent newsletters, local media, our website, and our automatic phone messaging system (Connect-Ed).

Additional H1N1 / Flu Resources:

Center for Disease Control (CDC), www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu
Washington State Department of Health, www.doh.wa.gov
Snohomish Health District, www.snohd.org