



STAMFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS UPDATE NOVEL H1N1 FLU

What is the Latest Information on H1N1?

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared influenza pandemic due to the geographic spread of the novel H1N1 virus. WHO's decision is a reflection of epidemiological changes in other parts of the world and is not a reflection of any change in the novel H1N1 virus or associated illness.

What Does This Mean for the Stamford Community and for the Schools?

The outbreak of the novel H1N1 flu continues to evolve and is currently in a stage where there is person-to-person transmission in the community. Because there are many cases in the community, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) currently is NOT recommending H1N1 testing for people with flu-like symptoms who are NOT hospitalized. If a healthcare provider believes testing is necessary, testing can be provided by commercial laboratories, such as Quest Diagnostics. Therefore, since all patients with H1N1 flu are not being tested, it is not possible to accurately report confirmed cases in Stamford Public Schools (SPS). However, according to the Centers for Disease Control, the presence of isolated cases of novel H1N1 flu in schools does NOT mean that a school should be closed. Stamford Public Schools, in conjunction with the Stamford Department of Health and Social Services, is taking the following measures:

- School attendance is being monitored so that spikes in student absences can be detected and investigated.
- Hospitalization rates are being monitored.
- Students who are symptomatic are sent to the nurse for evaluation.
- Good classroom hygiene (hand washing, etc.) is being practiced.
- School custodial staffs use EPA-approved sanitizers, which are effective antiviral cleaners.

Whether or not you are diagnosed with novel H1N1 is less important than what you do if you or your child becomes sick.

What Actions Should Be Taken at School and Home?

- If students or staff members are sick (fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, chills, vomiting and diarrhea) they should stay home. Anyone with an influenza-like illness

should stay home for 7 calendar days from the onset of symptoms. Children and adults who are well and without symptoms do not need to be excluded from school or work.

- Go to your doctor if you or your children are ill enough that you would normally see a health care provider. Use the same judgment you would use during a normal flu season. If you would not usually see a health care provider for the symptoms you or your child as now, you do not need to see a health care provider.
- Influenza antiviral drugs work best when started soon after symptoms begin (within two days). Check with your doctor.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands. Germs are spread that way.
- If you are at high risk for complications of the flu, consult your health care provider.

What is Being Done to Prepare for Fall 2009?

- On the national level, the CDC isolated the novel H1N1 virus, made a candidate vaccine virus, and has provided this virus to industry so they can begin scaling up for production of a vaccine, if necessary.
- On the state level, the CT DPH is working on a plan for potential future vaccine distribution, is continuing statewide surveillance for influenza, and is working with the State Department of Education on school guidance.
- On the local level, city, health, and school officials will update existing emergency plans as well as develop any new response and communications plans that may be necessary.

Resources

If you have specific questions, please contact the Stamford Department of Public Health Epidemiology Division at 203-977-4369. If you would like additional information, the following websites are recommended:

Stamford Department of Health and Social Services -

<http://www.cityofstamford.org/content/25/52/140/214/364/default.aspx>

Stamford Public Schools – <http://stamfordpublicschools.org/>

Centers for Disease Control – <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>

World Health Organization - <http://www.who.int/csr/outbreaknetwork/en/>

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