

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Flu can become a very serious issue in our community this season because of the presence of H1N1/Swine flu. This letter is being sent to the homes of all our students to answer questions that are being asked regarding the flu. We want to help you understand what your school and Public Health are doing to educate the public, and what you and your children can do to help prevent the spread of the flu. Flu is easily spread, but is easily prevented.

<p>Stay home when sick If you or your children have flu-like illness, please keep them home.</p>	
<p>Question: When can I send my child back to school?</p>	<p>Answer: We want your child fever free for 24 hours before you send your child back to school...fever free without the use of any fever-reducing medicine (e.g. Tylenol, Ibuprofen, etc). Do not use aspirin due to the risk of Reye's syndrome, a potentially fatal illness</p>
<p>Cleaning your hands We are asking students and staff to wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.</p>	
<p>Question: Why is washing your hands so important?</p>	<p>Answer: Touching your eyes, nose or mouth with flu infected hands is a very common way to pass the virus from person to person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing your hands for at least 20 seconds is effective in killing flu viruses. • If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. The alcohol content of the hand cleanser should be at least 60%
<p>Coughing and Sneezing Remind your children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue in the trash after use. If a tissue is not immediately available, coughing or sneezing into one's arm or sleeve (not into one's hand) is recommended.</p>	
<p>Question: Why is it important to cover my nose and/or mouth when I sneeze or cough?</p>	<p>Answer: Viruses can spread out in the air when you cough or sneeze. By covering, you help to reduce the chance of someone else coming in contact with the virus.</p>
<p>School Dismissals or Closure Your student's health is paramount. School dismissal or closures are highly unlikely. School closures could be recommended in extreme conditions, but not as a first means of preventing the spread of influenza. It is however, an important consideration which will balance the health risks of keeping students in school with the risks of making even more people sick with the flu.</p>	
<p>Question: Do school dismissals work to reduce the spread of the H1N1 Flu?</p>	<p>Answer: For the most part, school dismissals are not needed when the illness is mild, nor does it change the spread of the virus community-wide.</p>


Other Prevention Tips

As always, Public Health recommends that parents discuss their student's unique health needs during this flu season with their child's healthcare provider, including the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine.

Stay Informed

All parents are encouraged to stay updated with the latest information regarding Seasonal and H1N1 Flu. Information is available on the Kern County Department of Public Health's website www.co.kern.ca.us/health and through the H1N1 Hot Line at 1-877-81-Virus. Questions are being answered in both English and Spanish.

Sincerely,


Kern County Superintendent
of Schools



Public Health Officer - Kern County Department of
Public Health

