



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
MENTAL HYGIENE**

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*Commissioner*

## **Swine Influenza Information**

### **What is swine influenza?**

Swine flu is a respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses that regularly cause outbreaks in pigs. There have been reports of serious illness and deaths due to swine flu in Mexico, but the recently confirmed cases in the United States have been mild.

### **What are the symptoms of swine influenza?**

Swine flu symptoms are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, lethargy, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu.

### **If parents ask whether it is safe for their child to attend school, what should I say?**

So far only one school, St. Francis Preparatory in Queens, is closed. There is no reason for anyone else 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.

### **What should I do if a student is sick?**

The student should be evaluated by the nurse. If the nurse believes that the student may have influenza, the child should be separated from other students and sent home. The student should not take the school bus. Students with symptoms of flu should not return to school until they have been symptom-free for 1 to 2 days.

### **What should I do if a school employee has flu symptoms?**

The person should go home and not return to school until 1-2 days after they become symptom free.

### **What cleaning measures are needed if a child or staff member is ill?**

Hard surfaces that may have been contaminated by the ill child should be cleaned with disinfectant. If a child is ill, there is no need to clean the entire school.

### **Is swine influenza treatable?**

Yes. Antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). It is particularly important for people who have severe illness and for those with underlying illness (such as diabetes, heart, or lung disease) to be treated.

### **How does swine influenza spread?**

Swine flu viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human-to-human transmission is also possible, and appears to be occurring with this

outbreak. Spread is mainly through coughing or sneezing. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

**How can I protect myself from swine influenza?**

Here are the best ways to avoid getting or spreading swine influenza:

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

These are the same protections as those for seasonal flu and many other respiratory infections.

**Whom should I call if I have a question?**

Speak to your school nurse or nursing supervisor. If needed, the nurse will call the central School Health office for additional advice.

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