

H1N1/Swine (and seasonal) Flu Fact Sheet

Based On:

CDC Guidance on Helping Child Care and Early Childhood Programs Respond to Influenza during the 2009-2010 Influenza Season

For more information and updates, see these websites: www.flu.gov and www.healthyarkansas.gov. A list of Health Department mass flu clinic dates and locations in Arkansas can be found at www.healthyarkansas.gov.

Groups most at risk for complications from H1N1 (swine) flu and the first to be vaccinated:

- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age, including those in child care and early childhood programs.
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age.
- Pregnant women.
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel.
- Persons ages 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from flu.

Note: All children and many staff in early childhood settings will fall within these groups and should be among the first to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.

Recommended Strategies

- **Get vaccinated against the flu, both H1N1 and seasonal.** Vaccine to protect against the 2009 H1N1 flu virus is currently in production and is expected to become available in the fall. A vaccine to protect against seasonal flu will also be available this year, as it is each year. (See the list of Health Department mass flu clinic locations and dates at www.healthyarkansas.gov.)
- **Stay home when sick.** Children and caregivers with flu-like illness should remain at home and away from others at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- **Conduct daily health checks.** Early childhood providers should look for changes in a child's behavior, a report of illness or recent visit to a health care provider, and any signs or symptoms of illness. Information on how to perform health checks can be found at: www.bmcc.edu/Headstart/Trngds/Diseases/pg91-108.htm.

- **Separate ill children and staff and send them home as soon as possible.** Children and staff who develop symptoms of flu-like illness while at early childhood programs should be promptly separated from others until they can be sent home.
- **Encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette of both people who are well and those who have symptoms of the flu.** Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible. Keep hands away from your nose, mouth, and eyes. Cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available. For more information on hand hygiene, visit www.cdc.gov/cleanhands. For more information on respiratory etiquette, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Areas and items that are visibly soiled should be cleaned immediately. **All** areas should be regularly cleaned---with a particular focus on items that are more likely to have frequent contact with the hands, mouths, and bodily fluids for young children. **Note:** CDC does not believe any additional disinfection of environmental surfaces beyond routine cleaning is required.
- **Encourage early treatment for children and staff at high risk for flu complications.** Parents and staff should be encouraged to talk with their health care provider to determine if they or a member of their family are at high risk for flu complications.
- **Review and revise, as necessary, plans for responding to a flu outbreak.**

If early childhood programs follow the recommended strategies, closure should be avoidable. The Division of Child Care Licensing Unit, in consultation with the Department of Health, will make recommendations regarding closure, if necessary.

Early childhood providers should frequently remind children, their families, and staff about:

- the importance of staying home when ill,
- hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and
- the importance of talking with their health care provider to determine if they are at high risk for flu complications.