

September 8, 2009

## Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

The NM Department of Health recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
2. **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.
3. **If you or your child is sick, stay home** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever [100° F {37.8° C} or greater] or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- **Plan for child care at home** if your children get sick or their school is dismissed.
- **Plan to monitor the health** of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- **Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of complications from the flu**, and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, neurologic conditions, or diabetes.
- **Identify a separate room** in the house for the care of sick family members.
- **Update emergency contact lists.**
- **Collect games, books, DVDs** and other items to keep your child entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.
- **Talk to your school** administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

For more information, visit:

[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

[www.nmhealth.org/H1N1/index.shtml](http://www.nmhealth.org/H1N1/index.shtml)

[www.sde.state.nm.us/press/2009/h1n1/index.html](http://www.sde.state.nm.us/press/2009/h1n1/index.html)

Contact your healthcare provider or the New Mexico Nurse Advice Line at 1-877-725-2552 for more health information.