



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

District 2 Public Health

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Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White Counties

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Dear Parents:

Many of you have heard news reports about novel H1N1 influenza (previously called Swine Flu) in the U.S., in our state and in Northeast Georgia. While we are still learning about this new virus, it has become clear that children and teens are among those most at risk of catching it. Protecting your child's health and safety are top concerns, and working as a team is the most effective approach. Therefore, we want to share information with you about novel H1N1 flu, how we're responding and what you can do as well. Everyone has a role in protecting themselves, their families and their community.

The symptoms of novel H1N1 are similar to regular seasonal flu and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some infected people have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Most people who get it recover at home in approximately a week, the same as with seasonal flu. Novel H1N1 influenza spread easily and quickly around the world, and in June 2009, the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic. A pandemic is defined as a new disease that infects a large portion of the population and spreads quickly around the world.

There is no vaccine available yet to protect people from catching novel H1N1. Until a vaccine has been developed, our best course of action is to take steps to prevent the spread of illness in our childcare centers and schools – not just novel H1N1, but any kind of virus. These are everyday actions you and your children can take to stay healthy:

- Do not send your child to school with a fever. Keep children with flu-like illness at home so they don't infect others.
- Sick children should not return to school or participate in any activities putting them in contact with others until their fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze (using your sleeve is good). If you use a tissue to cover coughs or sneezes, throw it in the trash after you use it. Teach your children to do the same.
- Avoid giving children (18 years of age and younger) aspirin and products that contain aspirin. Aspirin has been linked to Reyes Syndrome.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective. Be a good role model for your children.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Have your family – including your children – vaccinated against regular seasonal flu.

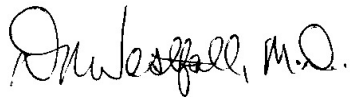
People who develop severe illness (high fevers lasting more than three days, difficulty breathing or other serious symptoms) should contact their local healthcare provider immediately. However, people who do not have underlying at-risk medical conditions who develop mild flu-like symptoms or who think they

were exposed but don't have any symptoms need not seek medical attention.

For now, Public Health is not recommending schools close when novel H1N1 infections occur in students and/or faculty. However, we are working closely with your school and other partners to monitor the situation. Recommendations may change as the disease spreads, as we learn more about it or if the virus changes.

Children are among those slated to receive the first doses of novel H1N1 vaccines. It is vitally important that you stay informed. Listen and watch for announcements from your school and county health department about vaccine availability, school closings and other matters involving the pandemic.

For more information about novel H1N1, contact your local county health department or go online to www.phdistrict2.org , www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Westfall, M.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

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District Health Director