



10/29/09

Policy Regarding H1N1 Exposure Notices

The purpose of an exposure notice is to let parents know that their child has been exposed to a communicable disease. These notices advise parents of actions they should take to help prevent their child from getting the illness, what symptoms they should watch for, and what they should do should their child become ill.

The Public Health Department is not issuing exposure notices for H1N1 at this time for several reasons. First, the H1N1 virus is widespread in the community. Pre-school aged and school aged children are most likely being exposed to H1N1 on a regular basis, both at school and in the community. Second, the current guidelines advise physicians not to test patients for H1N1 under most circumstances, therefore the vast majority of persons ill with the H1N1 flu are not confirmed. Fortunately, in most cases, H1N1 symptoms are mild, similar to the seasonal flu. And finally, the actions that we would recommend that parents take are the same regardless of whether a child is known to have H1N1 flu, suspected to have H1N1 flu, or not known to have H1N1 flu. In each case, we recommend that parents be aware of the symptoms of H1N1 flu, and keep their children home if they become sick.

The one exception for issuing an exposure notice would be if a probable or confirmed H1N1 case occurs in a setting comprised of medically vulnerable students (generally special education). Public Health will then provide notices because the actions and recommendations are different. If there is an exposure in one of those settings, Public Health should be notified right away.

Actions parents should take to prevent the flu:

1. Get the H1N1 flu vaccine for your child and yourself when it becomes available. Children and young adults ages 6 months to 24 years should get this flu vaccine. Pregnant women and individuals caring for children under six months should also get the vaccine. Because the H1N1 flu virus is circulating in our community, it is important to get the vaccination to protect you and your family from getting sick with the flu.
2. Conduct daily health checks. Before you take your child to school, look for any signs of illness or behavior change that may suggest illness. Keep your child home and away from others if you think they might be getting sick.
3. If your child becomes sick with flu symptoms (fever 100F°, cough, sore throat, runny nose), **keep your child at home until they no longer have a fever (*without taking any medicine*) for 24 hours.** If your child has other health issues, you may want to call your doctor for advice.
4. Teach your child good health habits by showing them how to cough and sneeze into their sleeves, or to cover their cough/sneeze with tissues. They should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces. These simple tips will go a long way in limiting the spread of disease – especially if everyone cooperates!

Not everyone with flu symptoms will need to be seen by a health care provider or tested for influenza. The best thing to do is to stay at home until you or your child is without a fever for at least 24 hours. But if you are worried that you or your child's symptoms are getting worse, be sure to contact your health care provider. As we learn more about the pandemic H1N1 flu, information may change. Be sure to watch for other notices from your child's school, or go to the Public Health Department website at www.sccphd.org and look for pandemic H1N1 updates. If you have additional questions, you may call the Public Health Information Line at 408-885-3980.

Thank you for helping us keep our school and community as healthy as possible.

Dedicated to the health of the whole community

The Public Health Department is a division of Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, owned and operated by the County of Santa Clara.