



Stephanie G. Knutson, MSN, RN School Nurse Consultant

## Special Edition: H1N1 Guidance for Connecticut Schools

Welcome back to a new and promising school year! Although school nurses are use to hitting the ground running, this year the potential H1N1 epidemic is a great concern for school districts nationwide. As the primary health professional in the school setting, school nurses will be in the spot light for guidance in all aspects of keeping students and staff safe, healthy and informed. This month's *Special Edition Bulletin* will hopefully provide helpful information and guidance in addressing novel H1N1 influenza concerns. Again, welcome back and best wishes for a safe and healthy school year!

Stephanie G. Knutson

### What is Novel H1N1 Influenza Virus?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. For frequently asked questions and answers about novel H1N1 influenza, please access the State Department of Public Health Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>.

### Recommended school responses for the 2009-10 school year

- 1. Stay home when sick:** Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. (For more information, see [CDC Recommendations for the Amount of Time Persons with Influenza-Like Illness Should be Away from Others](#).)
- 2. Separate ill students and staff:** Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and that those who care for ill students and staff wear protective gear such as a mask. [See the Technical Report for more details about separating ill students and staff >>](#).
- 3. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:** Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).
- 4. Routine cleaning:** School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary. (For additional guidance, access [http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/lib/ctfluwatch/h1n1/72209/cleaning\\_schools.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/lib/ctfluwatch/h1n1/72209/cleaning_schools.pdf).)
- 5. Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths. People at high risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases. [See the Technical Report for more details about early treatment >>](#).
- 6. Consideration of selective school dismissal:** Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk (for example, schools for medically fragile children or for pregnant students) a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk students. [See the Technical Report for more details about selective school dismissal >>](#).



#### H1N1 Special Points of Interest:

- *Recommended school responses*
- *Novel H1N1 Influenza Guidance for Connecticut School Nurses 2009*
- *School Dismissal Monitoring System*
- *Workshop Summary: Illnesses and Outbreak in the School Setting*
- *Tips for Talking to Children about H1N1*
- *CDC Planning Guidance*
- *Novel H1N1 Vaccine*

**NEW!!! Novel H1N1 Influenza Guidance For Connecticut School Nurses 2009 NEW!!!**

The purpose of this guidance is to review the current mitigation strategies and identify ways that school nurses can assist with the management of the H1N1 influenza illness in the school setting. This guidance is based on the most current information (August 2009) and is an evolving situation therefore, the best advice is to keep informed and updated by following the Connecticut H1N1 Web site at <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/site/default.asp> and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/>. To access this document please click on the Department of Public Health Web site at [http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/lib/ctfluwatch/h1n1/school\\_nurse\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/lib/ctfluwatch/h1n1/school_nurse_guidance.pdf).

**School Dismissal Monitoring System**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U. S. Department of Education have established a ***School Dismissal Monitoring System*** to report on novel influenza (H1N1)-related school or school district dismissal in the United States. Your assistance in reporting known school dismissals is very important. School dismissals can be reported in two ways:

1. Fill out an [online reporting form](#); or
2. Download an [electronic version of the reporting form](#), fill it out, and submit via email.

Please note that Connecticut, as well as other states will have access to the information that is reported on H1N1 occurrences. For more school-related influenza information, please access [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu).



***Workshop Summary : Illnesses and Outbreaks in the School Setting***

In preparation for the potential fall 2009 H1N1 outbreak, an informational session for school administrators (K-12), local health officials, and school medical advisors was sponsored by the Departments of Health, Education and Emergency Management and Homeland Security on July 22, 2009. Strategies, guidelines and lessons learned from the spring 2009, as well as a framework for discussing outbreaks in school settings, school safety and communicating during an epidemic, were among the topics discussed. Agenda, presentation materials and hand outs can be accessed at the Department of Public Health Web site at <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/cwp/view.asp?a=2533&q=443466>.

**Presentations:**

- **Novel H1N1: A Framework for Discussing Outbreaks in School Settings:** *Dr. Matthew L. Carter, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist, Department of Public Health.*
- **School Safety:** *James M. Thomas, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.*
- **Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Response:** *Caroline C. Baisley, MPH, Director of Health, Greenwich Department of Health, and Tom Mahoney, MS, Public Information Officer, Greenwich Department of Health.*
- **Communicating During Novel H1N1 Outbreak:** *William Gerrish, Director, Office of Communications, Department of Public Health.*

**Handouts:**

- **Letter from Governor M. Jodi Rell**
- **Letter from Federal Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services**
- **Update on School (K-12) and Child Care Programs: Interim CDC Guidance in Response to Human Infections with the Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus**
- **H1N1 Vaccination Liability Protections**
- **Cleaning Schools Effectively the Safe and Healthy Way**
- **Novel H1N1 Flu: Efficient Utilization of School Resources**
- **Welcome Back to School Letter to Parents - Template**
- **Letter to Parents, H1N1 Cases - Template**
- **Novel H1N1 Flu: Facts for families of school-aged children**

## Novel H1N1 Influenza Vaccine



Vaccines are the most powerful public health tool for control of influenza, and the U.S. government is working closely with manufacturers to take steps in the process to manufacture a novel H1N1 vaccine. The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. More specific dates cannot be provided at this time as vaccine availability depends on several factors including manufacturing time and time needed to conduct clinical trials. Access the following link for frequently asked questions and answers regarding novel H1N1 vaccine: [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination\\_qa\\_pub.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination_qa_pub.htm).

## Tips for talking to children about Novel H1N1 Influenza

Concern over Novel H1N1 influenza can make children anxious. Helping children cope with anxiety regarding the flu requires providing prevention information without causing alarm. Children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infection and spread of the virus. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.



### **Tips/Guidelines:**

- **Remain calm and reassuring.** Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions. Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.
- **Make yourself available.** Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns and questions. Provide time for children to talk about their feelings and help put their concerns into the appropriate perspective.
- **Know the symptoms of H1N1 Flu and how it spreads.** Symptoms of H1N1 flu include fever, sore throat, and cough. Some people also have a runny nose, fatigue, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The virus is transmitted through the coughing or sneezing of people infected with the virus. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouths or noses. The virus is not spread by eating pork or other foods.
- **Review basic hygiene practices.** Encourage children to practice everyday good hygiene by: washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze (if soap and water are not nearby, using an alcohol-based hand cleaner); not sharing food or drinks; covering their nose and mouth with a tissue or the crook of their elbow when they cough or sneeze; trying not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth, germs often spread this way; and, staying away from people who are sick.
- **Be honest and accurate.** In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality. Don't ignore their concerns. Children can be told that there are many ways to avoid the virus and that doctors can help to treat people who do get sick. Contact your school nurse or pediatrician and/or refer them to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for factual information.
- See [Talking With Children About Flu](#) for the full document on talking tips.

### **Content Source:**

[Talking With Children About Flu](#)

[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking\\_With\\_Children\\_About\\_Flu\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf)

The National Association of School Psychologists: [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)

The National Association of School Nurses: [www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)

The National Parent Teacher Association: [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

## **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** **Planning Guidance**

- Continuity of Learning : <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/guidance/continuity-recs.pdf>.
- Preparing for the Flu during the 2009-10 School Year: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/guidance/continuity-qa.pdf>.
- [CDC: H1N1 Flu \(Swine Flu\) Resources for Child Care Programs, Schools, Colleges and Universities](#)
- [Interim CDC Guidance for Nonpharmaceutical Community Mitigation in Response to Human Infections with Swine Influenza \(H1N1\) Virus](#): This document provides interim planning guidance for state, territorial, tribal, and local communities that focuses on several nonpharmaceutical measures aimed at reducing disease transmission and associated morbidity and mortality.
- [CDC: Novel H1N1 Vaccination Guidance for State, Local and Territorial Health Officials](#)



### **STEPHANIE G. KNUTSON, MSN, RN** **SCHOOL NURSE CONSULTANT**

Connecticut State Department of Education  
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services  
and Adult Education  
25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT

Phone: 860-807-2108  
E-mail: [stephanie.knutson@ct.gov](mailto:stephanie.knutson@ct.gov)

**...Keeping CT School Nurses  
Informed and Involved!**

## **!! Attention Principals and School Nurse Supervisors !!** **Guidelines for Managing Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Connecticut Schools**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) in collaboration with the State Department of Public Health has developed **Guidelines for Managing Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Connecticut Schools** to assist Connecticut public school districts and nonpublic schools (that are served pursuant to Connecticut General Statute (CGS) Section 10-217a) in effectively managing the health and safety needs of children with life-threatening allergic conditions. While this document speaks to food allergy management, concepts may be utilized for any allergy issues that requires management in school environments.

All school districts can expect, at some time, to have students with life-threatening food allergies enrolled in their schools. Therefore, each district shall develop and implement a Food Allergy Management Plan that focuses on prevention and an appropriate response should an emergency occur (see CGS Section 10-212c. Life-threatening food allergies: Guidelines; district plans). This plan may be adopted into policy and procedures at the district level. Using the district wide plan as a guide, each school must develop processes to identify all students with food allergies and develop and implement an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) and Emergency Care Plan (ECP) for each student. As a reminder, it is important that education and training of unlicensed personnel, such as teachers and chaperones, include responding to emergencies. **Guidelines for Managing Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Connecticut Schools** is located on the CSDE Health Promotion Services/School Nurse Web site at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=320768> (scroll down to the "Publications").

In addition, Public Act 09-155, **AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF ASTHMATIC INHALERS AND EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS WHILE AT SCHOOL**, requires local and regional boards of education to make available on either the board's or each school's Web site the district's plan for managing students with life-threatening food allergies. If such Web sites do not exist, the board must make the plan publicly available by some other means that it selects. The act also requires boards to provide notice about these plans along with the written statement about pesticide applications that they must, under Section 10-231c of the Connecticut General Statutes, provide parents and guardians. School superintendents must attest annually to the State Education Department that their districts are implementing these plans.



## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

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