

El Paso County Department of Health and Environment
ACTION STEPS TO HELP PREVENT
THE SPREAD OF INFLUENZA IN SCHOOLS

Action Steps for Everyone

- Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective when hands are not visibly soiled.
- Cover your mouth and nose** when you cough or sneeze. Cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands, or use a tissue.
- Stay home if you are sick** (including students, teachers, school staff, **everyone**) for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). If sick persons stay home they will help keep germs to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
- Clean surfaces and items** that are frequently touched such as desks, tabletops, door knobs, keyboards, and phones. Use standard cleaning agents.
- If you are pregnant, have asthma, diabetes or other chronic health conditions that put you at higher risk for flu complications**, talk to your health care provider about steps to take if you get sick.
- Get vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

Action Steps for Schools

- Have teachers, staff, and students serve as role models** to practice good hand hygiene and take designated hand washing breaks during the day to wash their hands. Have easy access to tissues.
- Keep an eye out for sick students** and send them to the school health room for further evaluation.
- Move students, teachers, and staff to a separate room** if they become sick at school, until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.
- Have personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks** available and ensure the equipment is worn by school nurses and other staff caring for sick people at school.

Action Steps for Schools During More Severe Flu Conditions

- Extend the time sick students, teachers or staff stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner.
- Allow high-risk students, teachers and staff to stay home to avoid exposure to sick people in school.** These individuals should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider.
- Conduct active fever and symptom screening** of students, teachers and staff upon arrival at school. Any sick students, teacher or staff identified should be separated from others, given a surgical mask and sent home.
- Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) at school such as rotating teachers between classrooms while keeping the same group of students in one classroom, moving desks farther apart, or postponing class trips.
- Consider how and when to dismiss students** by working closely with your local and state public health officials. If you decide to dismiss all students, please notify the El Paso County Health Department at 719-578-3220.
- Develop options for how school work can be continued at home** (such as homework packets, web-based lessons) in case school is dismissed or students spend a longer time at home.

Action Steps for Parents

- Be a good role model** by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Plan ahead for child care** if your child gets sick or his or her school is dismissed.
- Make arrangement with your workplace** should you need to stay home due to illness in your family.
- Have activities for your children** to do while at home, such as games, books, or DVDs.

Adapted from "Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Schools (Grades K-12)."
For complete tool kit and other H1N1 updates, visit EPCDHE Web site at:

www.elpasocountyhealth.org