



Placer County Health and Human Services Department

Richard J. Burton, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer and Department Director

Mark Starr, D.V.M., M.P.V.M
Community Health & Clinics, Director

August 14, 2009

Dear Superintendents and Principals:

This memo is a follow-up to the information we provided three days ago regarding pandemic H1N1 influenza. The purpose of this memo is to provide information from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) that was released today in the form of an alert.

For your convenience, we have pasted in the information applicable to schools beginning on the next page of this memo. The full alert is the Aug 13th document (currently top of the list) at CDPH's website with school-specific information, <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenzaSchools.aspx>. There is additional information that may be of use to you on this webpage, if you haven't reviewed it previously.

The key topics for your attention in the alert are: A) CDPH's endorsement of CDC's updated exclusion recommendations, that students or staff with influenza-like illness remain home until at least 24 hrs after fever ends; B) CDPH's endorsement of CDC's updated school guidance, which we sent to you on Aug 11th; and C) Recommendations for the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers by students. **This last item (C) regarding hand sanitizers is likely to be the most useful information for schools in this alert.**

The attention of your schools to the recommendations regarding the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers will be an important component of our collective efforts to limit the speed and extent of spread of this new influenza. Thank-you again for all of your efforts, and please feel to contact us at the number below as needed.

Kind regards,

A blue ink signature of Rich Burton, MD, MPH.

Rich Burton, MD, MPH
Health Officer and Department Director

A black ink signature of Mark Starr, DVM, MPVM.

Mark Starr, DVM, MPVM
Community Health & Clinics, Director

Attachment

School-relevant information from Aug 13th CDPH alert:

**From Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza
Health Alert Update
August 13, 2009**

A. CDPH Endorses CDC Updated Exclusion Recommendations

On August 5, 2009, the CDC released updated recommendations for the amount of time persons with influenza-like illness should be away from others. CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer. The new recommendation applies to camps, schools, businesses, mass gatherings, and other community settings where the majority of people are not at increased risk for influenza complications. This guidance does not apply to healthcare settings where the exclusion period should be continued for 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.

More stringent guidelines and longer periods of exclusion – for example, until complete resolution of all symptoms – may be considered for people returning to a setting where large numbers of high-risk people may be exposed, such as a camp for children with asthma or a child care facility for children younger than 5 years old.

CDPH concurs with the CDC exclusion recommendation and feels that most prisons and jails can follow the new exclusion recommendations unless there are large numbers of high-risk people in these settings. Such situations should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The complete recommendations can be accessed at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/exclusion.htm>

B. CDPH Endorses the CDC Guidance for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza during the 2009-2010 School Year

CDPH endorses and encourages local health departments and school systems to implement the CDC's *Guidance for State and Local Public Health Officials and School Administrators for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza during the 2009-2010 School Year*, released on August 7, 2009. This guidance contains recommendations for management of seasonal and H1N1 Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza in the school environment and suggests that interventions be based on a balanced evaluation of specific public health benefits weighed against social and economic costs of recommended interventions.

CDPH will be collaborating with the California Department of Education, local health departments, and other partners on implementation strategies for the CDC recommendations.

The complete guidance can be accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/>

C. CDPH Recommendations for the Use of Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers by Students in California Schools

• The use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (gels, foams, or wipes) containing at least 60% alcohol should be promoted in California schools because:

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are very effective germicides against many viruses (including influenza) and bacteria (including methicillin-resistant and susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA/MSSA)).

Millions of school days are annually lost by students due to absenteeism caused by colds and other common illness that are primarily spread among students through contact with contaminated hands. There is increasing concern about MRSA, which is also spread among students primarily through contact with contaminated hands.

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza is still causing frequent infections in California. Approximately half of these infections occur in children under the age of 18 years, and transmission is common in settings where children gather. When California schools resume classes, transmission of influenza will put both students and the community at risk, unless high rates of vaccination can be achieved when vaccine becomes available.

Access to soap and water for handwashing in schools may be limited, while alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be made easily available in every classroom.

Studies have shown that the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers can decrease rates of illness and absenteeism among students and has the potential to reduce teacher absenteeism, school operating costs, healthcare costs and parental absenteeism. It is possible that effective use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers might reduce the need for student dismissals.

• Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used safely in the classroom with a few simple precautions. The use of these products by students is recommended if:

Students are taught about the importance of hand hygiene practices in the control of communicable disease.

In elementary school classrooms, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are used under the direction of a teacher or other school employee.

In secondary schools, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are available in wall dispensers that are readily visible to a teacher, convenient for use by students, and able to be secured after school hours.

Students may use alcohol-based hand sanitizers periodically during each school day, in addition to hand washing with soap and water, after coughing or sneezing, toileting and before eating. This may be implemented by having students use the product each time they enter and leave the classroom.

There is a procedure in place to monitor the occurrence of allergic reactions; if a student appears to develop an allergic reaction to an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, advise the student to discontinue using the product and instead wash hands with soap and water, and notify the school nurse and parent of the possible allergic reaction.

All alcohol-based hand sanitizer products are kept away from contact with the eyes, mouth, and nose

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are kept away from any type of open flame or where sparks could be generated; smokers should not light a cigarette until their hands are completely dry after use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• For additional information on hand hygiene and hand sanitizers, please visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/features/handhygiene/>.