



Kalamazoo County

Health & Community Services

Linda Vail Buzas, MPA
Director, Health Officer

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Dear Parents,

As you know, there have been many cases of H1N1 influenza in the country and world since the initial outbreak in April 2009. It is spread easily person-to-person by the coughing or sneezing of an infected person. Children especially can become uncomfortably sick.

Symptoms are similar to those of seasonal influenza: fever of 100 degrees or greater, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches. Children could also experience nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The illness may last up to seven days. People with H1N1 influenza are considered as contagious for seven days after the onset of their symptoms, or 48 hours after their symptoms resolve, whichever is longest. If you or your child have mild flu-like symptoms, monitor and telephone your physician if necessary.

In the school/childcare setting, the people who have a higher risk of complications from H1N1 influenza infection include children younger than 5 years old (particularly those under age 2 years); pregnant women; persons with chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, diseases of the blood, liver or kidney; and persons with immune system problems. Here are some ways that you can prevent and prepare for the flu:

- Keep an ill child at home. **Do not send the child to school.** Let the school secretary know what is wrong when you call to tell them about the absence.
- Practice good health habits at home and at work. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Wash your hands often and well, especially if your hands have touched your eyes, nose, or mouth. Show your child how to properly wash their hands and encourage them to wash them often.
- Show your child how to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Get a flu shot. The vaccine will not protect you from the common cold, but it will protect against several strains of the seasonal flu and will reduce your chances of getting ill. A vaccine for H1N1 influenza will be available later this fall.

For more information on being ready for the seasonal influenza or the H1N1 influenza, you can call Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services at 269-373-5335 or go to our website at www.kalcounty.com/hcs.

None of us can predict how the flu will affect our community. All of us can be as prepared as possible at school and at home to maintain the healthiest environments for ourselves and each other.

Sincerely,

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