



Frances M. Rabinowitz, Superintendent of Schools
Hamlet M. Hernandez, Assistant Superintendent

April 29, 2009

Dear Parents,

I am writing this letter to update you on the swine influenza (flu) situation and share public health recommendations that have been made to address it.

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) would like to inform you that the State of Connecticut is carefully tracking swine flu in response to the recently reported cases in the U.S. and other countries. To date, only mild cases of the illness have been experienced in the United States.

At this time, the state and local health departments have advised us that students can continue to attend school, as long as they are not sick and do not have flu-like symptoms. Flu-like symptoms include fever (over 100 degrees F.), cough, sore throat, runny nose or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms that may be experienced with swine flu, include muscle pain, fatigue and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

If your child is experiencing any flu-like symptoms, it is important that he or she remain home until the child has gotten better and has been well for two days. In order to reduce the spread of germs, you should avoid taking your children to public gatherings such as the mall or sporting events while they are sick. It is also important to teach your children how to reduce the risk of getting the flu and how to protect others from infection. A one-page fact sheet, **Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs** is attached for your information.

General tips for decreasing the spread of germs include:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. **This is most important.** If water is not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if a tissue is not available, the crook of the arm).
- Teach your child to keep his/her hands away from his/her face.
- Dispose of tissues in a wastebasket, and then wash your hands.
- Do not share drinking cups or food.

We are consulting with Quinnipiac Valley Health District (QVHD) regarding best cleaning practices for infection control in our buildings should a case of swine flu occur.

While the current situation does not warrant any school closures in Hamden, if a **confirmed** case of swine flu is reported in a school, we may close that school for several days. We will communicate with you immediately in the event of a school closure.

For information about swine flu, visit the DPH's web site at <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu>, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/flu/swine.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping the children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,

Fran M. Rabinowitz
Superintendent of Schools

FMR/hs

Cc: Board of Education Members
Hamlet Hernandez, Assistant Superintendent
William McGraw, Director of Pupil Personnel Service

Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

Fact Sheet

1. Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2. Stay home when you are sick.

Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.

3. Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

4. Wash your hands often.

Washing your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.