

**MEMO: Message for K-12 schools**  
**FROM: Snohomish Health District**  
**DATE: September 11, 2009**

Snohomish Health District (SHD) is providing the following **updated guidance** for reducing the spread of influenza among students and school staff. These recommendations are for the 2009/10 school year assuming that the severity of influenza this fall and winter will be similar to that seen during spring and summer of 2009. If there are indications that influenza is causing more severe disease, additional strategies may be recommended locally. SHD will provide you with updated information as needed. For further guidance for responding to influenza in schools, go to <http://www.flu.gov/professional/school/schoolguidance.html>. "Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Schools" is at <http://pandemicflu.gov/professional/school/>

***Snohomish Health District recommends the following school responses at this time:***

**Get vaccinated against the flu:**

Seasonal and H1N1 influenza are caused by different viruses. This year there will be separate vaccines for seasonal and H1N1 influenza. Help your staff stay well. The best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated. For more flu vaccine information go to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/>

**Seasonal** vaccine is recommended for

- all persons 6 months of age and older, including pregnant women.

Adult seasonal influenza vaccine is currently available at some locations in the community, including pharmacies.

Pediatric vaccine for ages 6 months through 18 years may be available by the end of September.

Contact your health care provider or Snohomish Health District at 425.339.5220 for scheduling vaccinations.

**H1N1 vaccine is not yet available.** Snohomish Health District will provide updates when vaccine becomes available locally. Current H1N1 vaccine recommendations include the following groups: (Note these include all school-aged children and certain school staff)

- persons aged 6 months--24 years
- persons who live with or provide care for infants aged <6 months (e.g., parents, siblings, and daycare providers)
- health-care and emergency medical services personnel
- persons aged 25--64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications
- pregnant women

# 8 Steps For School Settings for H1N1 Influenza

*Snohomish Health District is providing the following suggestions to help slow the spread of influenza during the 2009/2010 Flu Season*

**Stay home when ill** (Note **CHANGE** from previous recommendation): Children or staff with flu-like illness should remain at home and away from others until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, ( $\geq 100^{\circ}$  F or  $37.8^{\circ}$ C orally) without the use of fever-reducing medications. See, <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/exclusion.htm> for details.

**Separate ill children and staff until they can be sent home.**

**Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.**

**Perform routine environmental cleaning of frequently contacted surfaces with typical cleaners.** No additional disinfection of environmental surfaces beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.

**Encourage early treatment for children and staff at high risk for flu complications:** People at high risk for influenza complications who present with influenza-like illness, including cold type symptoms, should talk with their personal health care provider as soon as possible. Visit <http://pandemicflu.gov/professional/school/schoolguidance.html>

**Stay in regular communication with local public health officials.**

**Continue to report >10% school absenteeism** as in past years. Forms can be downloaded at [www.snohd.org](http://www.snohd.org). Go to Influenza in A-Z index at top of Homepage, or contact Hollianne Bruce at [hbruce@shd.snohomish.wa.gov](mailto:hbruce@shd.snohomish.wa.gov)

**Consider selective school closures:** Selective school dismissals may be considered based on the population of an individual school. Snohomish Health District asks that you contact public health at 425-339-5278 for assistance in making individual closure decisions. Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk (for example, a school for medically fragile children or for pregnant students) a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk children. The decision to selectively dismiss a school should be made locally and should balance the risks of keeping the students in school with the social disruption that school dismissal can cause. **If flu severity increases, 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, notify CDC and your state health and education agency by reporting a school or school district dismissal at [www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal](http://www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal).

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to reduce the spread of influenza. Snohomish Health District looks forward to continued work with you to keep our community safe. More information on influenza, can be found at <http://www.flu.gov/professional/school/index.html> and [www.snocolflu.com](http://www.snocolflu.com)

For free H1N1 posters and other health materials go to <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/flyers.htm>