

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Virginia Department of Health continues to monitor the novel influenza A H1N1 virus. As you and your child prepare for school, you might have questions about this flu virus. We hope this letter provides information you find helpful.

Flu viruses spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with flu. Parents can help protect their children and reduce the spread of both seasonal and novel H1N1 flu viruses by encouraging the use of good cough and hand hygiene etiquette and keeping your child at home or away from others while ill. Also, it is important that you develop contingency plans should your child become sick and need to stay home. Although school closure is not advised for a single case of novel influenza A H1N1, if a significant number of faculty or students are absent and the school's ability to function is compromised, officials might recommend school closure. Your plans should also address how your family would respond if the school closes.

What you can do:

- Teach your child good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. This includes covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, coughing and sneezing into the inside of the elbow and discarding used tissues. Hands should be washed frequently with soap and water and handwashing should last for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. If hands are not visibly soiled, hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol are also effective.
- Vaccinate your child for seasonal flu when the vaccine becomes available in the early fall to protect against flu illness; if a separate vaccine for novel H1N1 flu virus becomes available, also vaccinate your child against this specific virus strain.
- Monitor yourself and your child for flu-like symptoms which include fever (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit), feverishness, cough, or sore throat. Some additional symptoms might be experienced with novel H1N1 flu, including muscle pain, fatigue and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.
- If you suspect that you or your child is getting the flu, stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.
- Plan now for your children's care if you or they become ill with the novel H1N1 virus. If this happens, you or your child might be asked to stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines. Talk to other family members, friends or neighbors about helping with child care or possibly sharing care in such a situation. Consider now who might be able to pitch in and help you. Be sure to have a family plan that includes having adequate food and supplies on hand to decrease your need to be out in public should someone get sick. .
- If symptoms worsen or cause you concern, contact your doctor's office by telephone for advice before arriving there in person.
- Stay informed. We encourage you to monitor the CDC Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>) and that of the Virginia Department of Health (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov>) and Virginia Department of Education (<http://www.doe.virginia.gov>) for additional resources and the most current recommendations.

Since April, the novel influenza A H1N1 virus has been confirmed throughout Virginia. We expect this virus will continue to circulate in the fall and that clusters of illness will occur in schools involving students, faculty, and staff. While it is uncertain how widespread or severe the novel flu virus will be during the upcoming flu season, taking the above steps will help to protect you, your family and your community. At this time the novel influenza A H1N1 virus is causing illness similar to that of seasonal flu strains. If that should change, we will be sure to provide you updated guidance.

We appreciate your help in slowing the spread of this virus and keeping our children safe and healthy. If you have additional questions or concerns, please call your local health department (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/lhd/>) or call **1-877-ASK VDH3** or **1-(877) 275-8343**

Sincerely,

Dave Jeck
Superintendent
Greene County Public Schools