

Information for Parents of Children Preschool through Kindergarten

MDH Recommendations for Response to Influenza for Childcare and Early Childhood Programs (Pre-K)

Novel H1N1 influenza appears to be similar to seasonal influenza in severity of illness and transmission. Most people who have had Novel H1N1 influenza have recovered without complications. However, like any flu virus, Novel H1N1 can be a serious disease. Some people have been hospitalized with Novel H1N1 and several deaths have occurred in Minnesota.

People at high risk for complications from influenza (seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza) are those with: underlying medical conditions (such as heart or kidney disease, asthma or other chronic lung disease, diabetes, neuromuscular or neurological disorders, or a suppressed immune system), pregnant women, children under 5 years (especially those under age 2), and people 65 years and older.

Hand washing, covering your cough, and staying home when ill are the primary methods to decrease the spread of influenza. However, many young children are not able to control their coughs and sneezes. Therefore, these strategies may be less effective in childcare and early childhood programs than in K-12 schools. Also, children can shed (are infectious) influenza virus for longer periods of time than adults.

Minnesota Department of Health Recommendations:

Strongly encourage parents with children 6 months and older to get their children vaccinated with Seasonal Influenza vaccine and Novel H1N1 Influenza vaccine when it becomes available. These are two different vaccines.

Parents and guardians should develop a plan with their child's health care provider to determine what steps should be taken if their child is either exposed to influenza or develops symptoms of influenza.

Keep your ill children home who have the symptoms of influenza-like illness for seven (7) days after symptoms begin or 24 hours after resolution of acute symptoms which ever is longer. Children generally shed the influenza virus (although at lower levels compared to when they had a fever) for 7 to 10 days after their symptoms begin and can spread influenza. This longer exclusion period is intended to help prevent the spread of influenza within a program with groupings of high-risk individuals. Parents should keep children home for the exclusion period even if they are on antiviral drugs or have had a flu test that is negative. Flu tests are not always accurate. During the exclusion period, children should stay at home except to get medical care.

Ensure regular cleaning of all areas with particular focus on items that are more likely to have frequent contact with hands, mouths, and bodily fluids of young children. Sanitize mouthed toys according to routine recommendations.