

## **Message: Fall 09 H1N1 (Swine Flu) & Seasonal Flu Bethel School Action Plan**

Dear Parents,

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have advised us to anticipate more H1N1 illness this Fall and Winter than we've seen this past Spring and more school-based outbreaks because influenza is typically transmitted in the cooler months. **We have put together a flu action plan** to respond effectively to limit the spread of this virus and protect students and staff to the best of our ability. We are soliciting your help and assistance in joining our team to minimize the impact of this virus on your family and neighbors by following well developed prevention and treatment procedures. The H1N1 virus is unusual and requires extraordinary efforts by all of us to assure everyone is protected.

Novel H1N1 and seasonal flu will co-circulate this Fall-Winter 2009-2010. The timing, spread and severity of novel H1N1 virus and seasonal flu are uncertain. Seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against novel H1N1. CDC is recommending that people **receive both seasonal flu vaccination and H1N1 vaccination** (when available) based on a priority group plan that takes into consideration the risk of severe illness from H1N1.

We will use a menu of tools to manage flu in coordination with local and state health officials, community partners, local physicians and you. The tools we use will correspond to the severity of flu illness that is being reported and local flu activity. Our action plan includes **monitoring illness** and severity of flu at school, parental surveillance of children at home, appropriate exclusion of ill people from school, **promotion of good hygiene** in school and at home, facilitation of voluntary seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccinations based on risk of illness, helping families identify their children who are at high risk for flu complications and encouraging them to develop and use a medical care plan developed with their physician. Thorough cleaning and **sanitization of schools** will also play an important role in preventing the spread of flu.

As of August 5, 2009, the CDC revised its recommendation concerning how long people with flu-like illness should stay home and away from other people in order to prevent spreading flu. CDC now recommends that those with flu-like illness **stay home at least 24 hours after their fever is gone**, without using fever-reducing medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Our action plan will be flexible and responsive to the conditions in our community and seriously consider CDC and the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health recommendations. **CDC has informed us that closing schools has not been the best tool** to use for limited student/staff flu occurrences and will only be considered if the severity of flu illness warrants it. Our goal is to keep students, staff and visitors healthy in the schools and work together to protect those at high risk for flu complications.

It is important to receive seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccinations if recommended to do so by your physician. We expect the novel H1N1 vaccine to be **available in October** in multiple formulations, including a formulation that does not contain the preservative thimerosal. Health officials have put together a priority group list of people who should receive H1N1 vaccination as vaccine becomes available. Vaccine will be offered at private physician's offices as well as at public clinics. Managing this flu season will require extraordinary efforts by all of us at home and at school to assure everyone is protected in the schools. We will provide you with the most current information about what we know and do not know to help you make informed decisions on you family's health. Please join us by taking an active role in protecting ourselves and others this Fall and Winter in order to protect our children and community to the best level possible.

## **Information Resources:**

### **U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention**

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>

CDC recommends 3 steps to fight the flu:

1. Take time to get vaccinated (urges yearly vaccination and lists the people for whom vaccination is recommended)
2. Take everyday preventive actions (includes information on cough etiquette, handwashing, and staying away from others when sick)
3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them (explains what antivirals are and how to get and use them)

<http://www.cdc.gov>

### **Connecticut Flu Watch** (vaccination info)

[www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch](http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch)

**Flu Wiki** - [www.fluwiki.info](http://www.fluwiki.info)

### **Get Pandemic Ready**

[www.getpandemicready.org](http://www.getpandemicready.org)

### **U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services**

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

**Good Home Treatment of Influenza** by Grattan Woodson, MD, FACP [www.birdflumanual.com](http://www.birdflumanual.com)

**Pandemic Home Care** (regular updates from CDC & WHO, includes blog)

[www.pandemichomecare.com](http://www.pandemichomecare.com)

**American Red Cross** - [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

## **TIPS AS SCHOOL STARTS!**

***Teach your children to wash their hands*** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.

***Teach your children not to share personal items*** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.

***Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.*** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

***Keep sick children at home*** for at least 24 hours ***after*** they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.

***Do not send children to school if they are sick.*** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be *sent home*.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Chesley  
Superintendent of Schools

Laura L. Vasile  
Director of Health