

September 4, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As many are aware, there is heightened concern and interest regarding the H1N1 Flu with the recent start of school. H1N1 Flu (also known as Swine Flu) is a new flu virus causing illness throughout the country. The virus is spreading in the same fashion that the “regular” seasonal flu spreads. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states the virus is contagious and spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing and/or touching infected areas. As we approach flu season, Henry County Public Schools has developed the attached “Frequently Asked Questions for Parents of Henry County Students.”

In addition, principals have the flexibility in the way schools document absences regarding H1N1 Flu, seasonal flu, and flu-like symptoms. Parents will be able to verify, by using the attached form, that their child was absent due to flu-like symptoms. This form will also be posted on the HCPS web site under the “H1N1 Flu Information” tab. The division’s attendance policy was not changed. Parents will still have to provide documentation by a physician for all absences except H1N1 Flu and seasonal flu.

The school division will follow the recommendations provided by the Virginia Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Virginia Department of Education to guide decisions and steps to help minimize the overall impact on any school or the community.

If your child is sick and has a fever, he/she needs to stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever subsides and without using a fever-reducing medication. To keep everyone informed information is available on the Henry County Public School System’s web page at www.henry.k12.va.us.

Sincerely,

Anthony Jackson, Division Superintendent
Sherry M. Vestal, RN, School Nurse Coordinator

Attachments

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents of Henry County Students

Q. – What is a pandemic?

A. – A pandemic is the transmission of infectious disease over a large region or throughout the world. According to the World Health Organization, the United States is experiencing a pandemic regarding the H1N1 virus.

Q. – Does Henry County Schools have a pandemic plan?

A. – Yes. Henry County Public Schools has a Pandemic Protocol (that excludes H1N1) and is found on our webpage which is www.henry.k12.va.us The information is under the heading “H1N1 Flu Information.”

Q. – Do we have a protocol for H1N1?

A. – Yes. We have a procedure for H1N1 that was released on 9/1/09. This procedure may be found on the Henry County Public Schools website under the heading “H1N1 Flu Information.”

Q. – What is the difference in seasonal flu and H1N1 flu?

A. – Typical seasonal flu is seen usually during the winter months and ends around March while H1N1 has been year long. The seasonal flu tends to not infect the school age population while the H1N1 is primarily infecting ages 5-49.

Q. – Is there a different shot for H1N1 than the “regular” flu shot?

A. – Yes. The regular (seasonal) flu shot is different from the H1N1 shot and may be taken separately or together.

Q. – Should I take a seasonal flu shot, H1N1 flu shot or both?

A. – The CDC has recommended both vaccines based on the following guidelines: The H1N1 vaccine for the following: pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems. For seasonal flu – it is recommended that the following groups receive the vaccine: Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday, pregnant women, people 50 years of age and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, people who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, and people who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

- Healthcare workers;
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu;
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated);
- Health care workers;
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu; and
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated).

Q. – Will students be offered the H1N1 vaccine?

A. – As soon as the local Health Department receives the first shipment of the H1N1 vaccine, clinic dates and times will be determined and staff and students will be offered the vaccine at no cost.

Q. – What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1?

A. – The symptoms for H1N1 are the same as symptoms for the seasonal flu which include: fever, sore throat, cough, upper respiratory symptoms (runny or stuffy nose), muscle aches, headaches, tiredness and rarely vomiting and diarrhea.

Q. – What do I do if my child has signs and symptoms?

A. – If your child has signs and symptoms of the flu, you should contact your child's primary care physician and follow the recommendations of your child's doctor.

Q. – Will do I do if my child has been exposed to someone with H1N1 flu?

A. – If you are concerned that your child may have been exposed to someone with H1N1, you should contact your child's primary care physician and follow his/her advice.

Q. – What do I do if my child is out of school for an extended period of time?

A. – If your child is sick with the flu and is out of school for an extended period of time, you should contact your child's guidance counselor or teacher so that work may be provided for completion while your child is home recuperating. Please make sure that your child's primary care physician is aware of your child's illness. Make sure that you notify your child's school as to why your child is home. Your child should stay at home for at least 24 hours after his/her fever subsides and without fever-reducing medication. If your child must leave your home, he/she should wear a face mask to prevent others from being exposed to the virus. You should contact your primary care physician and he/she will prescribe your child an antiviral medication if deemed necessary. You should encourage your child to drink as many fluids as possible to prevent dehydration.

*Please Note
The information provided within this document are for informational purposes only. If you have concerns about your child's health please contact your primary care provider.*

Q. – When can my child return to school and what do I need to do about the county's attendance policy?

A. – If a student is sick and has a fever, he/she needs to stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever subsides and without using a fever-reducing medication. Principals have the flexibility in the way schools document absences regarding H1N1 Flu, seasonal flu, and flu-like symptoms. The division's attendance policy was not changed. Parents will still have to provide documentation by a physician for all absences except H1N1 Flu and seasonal flu. Parents will be able to verify, by using the attached form, that their child was absent due to flu-like symptoms. This form will also be posted on the HCPS web site under the "H1N1 Flu Information" tab.

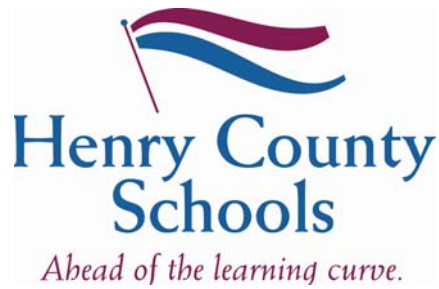
Q. – Why are schools not closed?

A. – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advised school divisions to not close school for communities who have cases of the H1N1 virus. Even though the country is experiencing an H1N1 pandemic, the only reason that school divisions should close school would be the lack of teachers available for instruction.

Q. – Who can I call if I have questions?

A. – You may call your child's physician, school nurse, the Nurse Coordinator at 276-634-4753 or the Health Department at 276-638-2311.

To keep everyone informed information is available on the Henry County Public School System's web page at www.henry.k12.va.us. Regular updates will be provided as necessary.



STUDENT:	SCHOOL:
DATE OF BIRTH:	GRADE:
CUSTODIAL PARENT/GUARDIAN:	
ADDRESS:	PHONE#:

I certify that my child _____ was absent because of seasonal/H1N1 flu.

I certify that my child has been symptom-free for 24 hours.

Please indicate below the symptoms that your child experienced during this illness: (check all that apply):

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Nausea/vomiting
- Diarrhea

Parent Signature

Date



For School Purposes Only – to be completed by principal.

Dates Absent _____

Total Days Absent _____