

BOARD:
Paul C. Aughtry, III
Chairman
Edwin H. Cooper, III
Vice Chairman
Steven G. Kisner
Secretary



C. Earl Hunter, Commissioner

Promoting and protecting the health of the public and the environment

BOARD:
Henry C. Scott
M. David Mitchell, MD
Glenn A. McCall
Coleman F. Buckhouse, MD

August 27, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The novel H1N1 flu (swine flu) has continued to affect our state and has been declared a worldwide pandemic. We need your help to prevent the spread of flu among our children.

The novel H1N1 flu (swine flu) spreads the same way that regular seasonal flu viruses spread, mainly through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with the flu. It also spreads by touching contaminated objects and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot each year. We expect that a vaccine to fight the novel H1N1 flu (swine flu) will be available later this year. Please watch for its availability and discuss vaccination for you and your family with your health care provider.

You can also help slow the spread of flu by doing the following:

- Talk with your child about hand washing. Frequent hand washing with soap and warm water helps remove viruses and other germs. Children should wash their hands for about 20 seconds or as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- Teach your child to cover her or his mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and then to throw the tissue away. Your child can cough or sneeze into his or her upper sleeve if no tissue is handy. Wash hands afterward.
- Encourage your child to eat healthy foods, exercise, and get plenty of rest.
- Keep your child home if he or she has a fever of 100°F or higher with a cough or sore throat for which there is no known cause. Call your child's school or childcare provider and tell them your child's symptoms. In most cases, your child can return after he or she has been fever free for at least 24 hours **without** taking fever-reducing medications.
- Make sure the school or childcare provider has a way to reach you. Children who become ill with flu-like symptoms at school or with a childcare provider must be sent home.

We greatly appreciate your help and understanding. We will do our best to keep schools and childcare programs open. To help us do this, we encourage you to review the childcare and school exclusion lists on our Web site: www.scdhec.gov/health/disease/exclusion.htm. They list more information about when a child should be kept home. Families should have plans in the event that schools and childcare programs must be closed.

Information on the novel H1N1 flu (swine flu) continues to change quickly. We will do our best to keep you informed. Together we can slow the spread of flu. If you have questions about the novel H1N1 flu (swine flu), please call 211 or your local public health department.

Sincerely,

C. Earl Hunter, Commissioner



C. Earl Hunter, Commissioner

Promoting and protecting the health of the public and the environment.

Updated Exclusion Criteria for Influenza / Influenza-Like Illnesses

Amendment to the Official List of Conditions Requiring Exclusion from School for 2009-2010 and the Official List of Conditions Requiring Exclusion from Out-of-Home Childcare Settings for 2009-2010, effective August 28, 2009

The exclusion and reporting criteria for influenza / influenza-like illnesses (ILI)¹ outlined in this document supersede those noted in the June 2009 revisions to the **Official List of Conditions Requiring Exclusion from School for 2009-2010** and the **Official List of Conditions Requiring Exclusion from Out-of-Home Childcare Settings for 2009-2010**.

The exclusion and reporting criteria below are based on the most recent epidemiological and clinical data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as of August 28, 2009. These exclusion and reporting criteria are subject to change as additional information becomes available. As noted below, ILI exclusion criteria apply to everyone at the school or childcare setting, including children/students, faculty, staff, volunteers, etc.

Exclusion Criteria for Students	Exclusion Criteria for Employees	Documentation or Criteria to Return	Reportable to Health Department?
Exclude students with influenza or ILI ^A until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of a fever ² (without the use of fever-reducing medicines).	Same as for students.	Parent Note or parent communication (or employee statement) verifying that the child or employee has not had a fever for 24 hours and has not taken any fever-reducing medications for 24 hours.	Report outbreaks immediately by phone. ³ Schools: Report ILI daily using DHEC's web-based surveillance system. ⁴

The School and Childcare Exclusion Lists have been updated to match this new guidance, effective August 28, 2009. They are available from the DHEC website: <http://www.scdhec.gov/health/disease/exclusion.htm>. The English and Spanish Parent brochures for School and Childcare Exclusion already reflected the revised guidance from the CDC, and so no updates were needed.

¹ ILI is defined as an oral temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more with a cough and/or sore throat for which there is no other known cause besides the flu or an influenza-like illness.

² An ill person has *signs of a fever* if he or she feels warmer than usual to the touch, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

³ Report suspected outbreaks and clusters of diseases or symptoms that would not be reportable as single cases. An "outbreak" in a school is defined as an excess number of cases or symptoms over the expected occurrence of disease within a school or classroom or group.

⁴ Until DHEC's web-based surveillance system is available, schools should complete paper-based ILI reporting forms daily and submit them to their district surveillance coordinator. District surveillance coordinators should review the information and assure that follow-up has occurred if the data suggests an outbreak at a school. Private schools should complete the paper-based reporting forms and maintain the information at the school level. ILI-reporting and tracking forms are available from the August 21, 2009 DHEC Health Advisory: **Interim Guidance for Nonresidential K-12 School Responses to Influenza during the 2009-2010 School Year**, available from this page: <http://www.dhec.sc.gov/health/disease/han/notifications.htm>.