

## H1N1 Influenza Preparedness



With students returning to the classroom - and the flu season approaching - health officials across the nation are bracing for a possible increase of H1N1 flu virus cases.

The H1N1 virus, or swine flu as it is also known, continues to spread across the region. San Diego County ends the month of July with 767 confirmed cases of pandemic H1N1 Influenza to date, including 13 deaths.

Residents are also encouraged to take precautions: covering your mouth when coughing, sneezing and washing hands frequently and properly. These routine precautions can go a long way in protecting your health and the health of those around you.

Only schools with high numbers of high-risk students or students getting the flu should actually consider closure. The CDC's schools closure recommendations balance the need to contain the spread of the H1N1 swine flu against the disruption to education that school closures can bring. Some of the CDC recommendations are:

- If flu is suspected, the affected person should contact a health-care worker as soon as possible. People at high risk (due to pregnancy, or medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes) should take antiviral medication immediately to reduce risk of prolonged or dangerous illness.
- If any family member of a student becomes ill with the flu, should stay home for five days from the day symptoms arise, the experts advised. The CDC recommends the use of surgical masks for ill students or staff and those caring for them.
- Any ill student or school staff member should stay home for an additional 24 hours after flu symptoms such as fever have ended, even if they are using antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu. Extend the stay-at-home period for sick students

to seven days, even after symptoms have subsided.

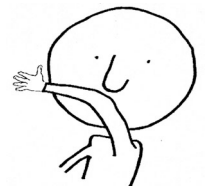
- Parents should check their children each morning for flu symptoms and keep them home if they have a fever. Students should also be screened for flu symptoms upon arrival at the school.
- Close schools after careful weighing of the risks and benefits to students and the community. Schools should be closed for five to seven calendar days, and then officials should reassess the advisability of re-opening the school. Even during a school closure, teachers and staff should have access to the school so they can continue to provide instruction via the Web and other means. Speaking at the news conference, Arne Duncan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, said that "realistically, some schools will close this fall. If they do, it is important to us that students continue to learn."

The American Red Cross and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are recommending people prepare for a potential flu outbreak by stocking extra food, water and supplies at home. That will reduce the need to go out should H1N1 flu become more widespread, thereby limiting potential for exposure to the virus. If a person does get sick and has extra supplies on hand, they will help reduce the spread of the flu by staying home. The Red Cross also recommends you take this opportunity to be prepared for any disaster by getting a preparedness kit, making a plan and being informed.

The most current information on the H1N1 flu can be found at the CDC Web site: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The County of San Diego website: [www.sdcounty.ca.gov](http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov) or by calling 211.

## Cover your Cough

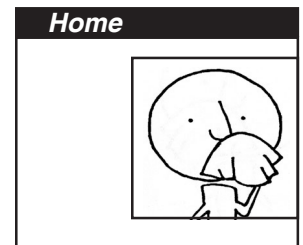
The tiny droplets expelled during coughing and sneezing can infect someone else. Cover Your Cough by using a tissue or shirt sleeve if a tissue is not available.



Avoid touching the mouth, nose and eyes with hands.



Frequent hand washing also can prevent the spread of colds and flu. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with plenty of soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based gel or wipes.



If you're sick with a cold or the flu, stay home. Avoid close contact with those who are sick. Conversely, those who have a cold or flu should not mingle with others. The flu typically lasts a week to 10 days.