



WESTBROOK SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

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Dear Parents:

The Westbrook School Department is closely monitoring developments in the H1N1 ("Swine Flu") situation. We continue to take our lead from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC). As you probably know, there are now confirmed cases of H1N1 in Maine. If there is a confirmed case in a Westbrook school, then we will alert you and close the school. A closure would most likely last for seven calendar days.

We already have a pandemic flu plan as part of our Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. We are meeting regularly to plan as the situation continues to develop.

We will follow recommended protocol when children are sick and parents call the school to report the absence. Parents will be asked if the illness appears to be influenza-like. If so, then the school nurse will call to follow up.

We are very carefully following state directives for our response to the evolving flu emergency. The health and safety of our students and staff are paramount and we will do all that we can to be prudent and proactive in protecting them.

On the opposite side of this letter, we have provided some important information. Please read carefully and follow suggestions for prevention of "swine flu" and planning for the possibility of one of our Westbrook schools being closed.

We will continue to update you as the situation warrants. For the most current information, visit our website at www://westbrookschoools.org, receive information by e-mail (sign up on our website), or call our emergency hotline (591-6222).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Reza Namin, PhD'.

Dr. Reza Namin
Superintendent of Schools

General Information on Swine Flu and How to Prevent It

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses (H1N1). People do not normally get swine flu, but human infection is now occurring in the United States and internationally. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you develop flu symptoms, contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu in people?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include:

- ◆ fever
- ◆ cough
- ◆ sore throat
- ◆ body aches
- ◆ headache
- ◆ chills
- ◆ fatigue

Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu.

What can my family do to prevent getting swine flu?

The single best way to prevent swine flu is to practice good hygiene and health habits.

1. Avoid close contact

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2. Stay home when you are sick

Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

3. Cover your mouth and nose

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze onto your upper sleeve, not your hands. Put your tissue in the waste basket.

4. Clean your hands

Washing your hands often with soap and water (or alcohol-based hand cleaner) will help protect you from germs.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Practice other good health habits

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat healthy foods.

What if I traveled to a place that has cases of swine flu?

The current recommendation is that if people have traveled to an area where cases have occurred in growing numbers - monitor your health for 7 days. If you develop a fever during that time and respiratory symptoms, call your health provider. Your health care provider will then contact the Maine CDC to sort things out. If you and your family have just come back from Mexico and you develop a fever, stay home and contact your health care provider.

Is there anything else I should do now?

The Westbrook School Department continues to coordinate with and take our lead from Dr. Dora Anne Mills at the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) as we make preparations for the possibility that in the coming days there will be confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza ("swine flu") in some Maine students. It is likely that some schools may have to close for several days to a week, due to confirmed or probable cases.

Due to this possibility, have alternative plans for child care if schools are closed.

Questions?

State Hot Line: 1-888-257-0990
CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

(Source: Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention, April 29, 2009)