

Dear Parents,

This letter is to inform you that [NAME] county has entered a heightened surveillance stage resulting from the presence of a novel (new) swine flu virus that is making people sick in several states, including New York State, and also in Mexico. Although, to date, only mild illness has occurred in the United States, we realize that many people are worried and we hope this letter will help address your concerns.

At this time, the local health department has advised us that students can continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick and do not think they have flu symptoms. Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may be experienced with swine flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is important that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Help your children to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of swine flu in our school at this time. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control.

We will inform parents immediately if the situation changes and it becomes necessary to close schools. If schools are closed, please do not make arrangements—such as sending children to a friend's home or group childcare—that will put them in close contact with other children.

Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at www.cdc.gov, www.nyhealth.gov, or the 24 hour toll-free hotline that New Yorkers across the State can use to get answers to their questions. The hotline is 1-800-808-1987.

[LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION]. Thank you for your cooperation to keep our children and our schools healthy.