SCHOOL FACT SHEET
PANDEMIC H1N1 2009 INFLUENZA VIRUS

Pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza virus (previously swine flu) is a new virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of H1N1 flu was under way. There is widespread transmission in California.

CAUSE: Pandemic H1N1 2009 Influenza A Virus

SYMPTOMS: Symptoms of Pandemic H1N1 influenza are similar to symptoms of regular seasonal human influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting with Pandemic H1N1 influenza. Like seasonal flu, Pandemic H1N1 flu may make underlying chronic medical conditions worse.

SPREAD: Spread of Pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person by close contact, when people with influenza cough or sneeze onto others' faces within a short distance—less than a six-foot circle (radius).

Flu viruses occasionally stay suspended in the air, but tend not to be as infectious at a distance. Mostly, infectious flu particles drop to the ground over a short distance. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses recently on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. (The influenza A virus generally can live up to a 48 hours on dry hard surfaces.)

INCUBATION: The estimated time from exposure until the time infection occurs is not certain but appears to range from 1-7 days, with most cases 1-5 days.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

SCHOOL EXCLUSION: Temperature greater than 100 degrees F and one other respiratory symptom of cough or sore throat.

DIAGNOSIS: Diagnosing Pandemic H1N1 influenza infection generally requires a medical visit and a swab of the nose or throat within the first 4 to 5 days of illness. However, because H1N1 influenza is now widespread, testing is now limited to hospitalized and fatal cases and, if resources permit, healthcare workers and pregnant women.

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TREATMENT: CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for treatment of Pandemic H1N1 influenza patients with severe illness (e.g., hospitalization, symptoms worsening) or prevention of infection for those with risk factors for severe illness. Risk factors include those who are less than 5 years of age, pregnant, greater than 65 years of age or having certain chronic medical conditions.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

2. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

4. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

5. If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them, until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever.

6. Regular cleaning schedules should be observed. It is unnecessary to implement extra cleaning routines. Influenza viruses generally become non-viable on hard, dry surfaces in less than 48 hours and are easily killed by commonly used disinfectants.

Source: Shasta County Public Health

Guidance in this document is based on information available as of August 26, 2009 and is subject to change as the outbreak evolves.