

Jefferson County School System

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Dear Parents or Guardians:

I am sure most of you have seen or heard news reports about the PANDEMIC H1N1 flu, also known as "Swine Flu" making its way into the United States. Confirmed cases continue to grow throughout the country. We know that children and teens are among those most at-risk of catching it.

We want to share some basic information with you about PANDEMIC H1N1 flu, how the Jefferson County School System is preparing and responding and what you can do to protect your family's health.

As of right now, our public health officials are not recommending schools close when PANDEMIC H1N1 infections occur in students and/or faculty. However, we are working closely with the East Central Georgia Health District officials, the Georgia Department of Education and other partners to monitor the situation. Recommendations may change as the disease spreads, as we learn more about it or if the virus changes.

There is no vaccine available yet to protect people from catching Pandemic H1N1. Until a vaccine has been developed, our best course of action is to take steps to prevent the spread of swine flu as well as all viruses in our school.

The East Central Health District officials have suggested the following everyday actions you and your children can take to stay healthy:

- Do not send your child to school with a fever. Keep children with flu-like illness at home so they do not infect others.
- Sick children should not return to school or participate in any activities putting them in contact with others until their fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze (using your sleeve is good). If you use a tissue to cover coughs or sneezes, throw it in the trash after you use it. Teach your children to do the same.
- Avoid giving children aspirin and products that contain aspirin. Aspirin has been linked to Reyes Syndrome.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. Be a good role model for your children.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Have your family – including your children – vaccinated against regular seasonal flu.

Our school system is encouraging staff and students to practice good hygiene, including proper hand washing techniques. We encourage students to use hand sanitizer with 60 percent alcohol content in situations where hand washing facilities are not immediately available.

We will continue to make families aware of the impact of influenza on our school environments. Awareness and prevention are the best means of helping our community stay healthy.

Children are among those slated to receive the first doses of H1N1 vaccines. It is vitally important that you stay informed. Listen and watch for announcements from this school system and our county health department about vaccine availability, possible school closings and other matters involving the pandemic.

If necessary, we will be using our Crisis Communication System to bring information regarding H1N1 flu. Through this system, a telephone call goes out to every student's parents in just minutes. Please be sure to keep your telephone numbers current with the school office. When a call is made to parents through the Crisis Communication System, the Caller ID will display 478-471-8057 rather than the school or system's local number. The system will leave a message on answering machines if the call is answered in that manner.

For more information about Pandemic H1N1, contact our local county health department or go online to www.ecphd.com, www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov. We will also post information on the school system website at www.jefferson.k12.ga.us.

Sincerely,

Carl Bethune

Carl Bethune
Superintendent