

Update to the Pandemic Influenza Toolkit for Childcare Providers

This information is in addition to the information that is provided in the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Pandemic Flu Toolkit for Early/Child Care Providers and Families.

This year a new influenza (flu) virus began spreading in the United States and around the world and causing illness in many people. This flu virus is named pandemic H1N1 flu. The virus spreads from person to person in the same way that regular seasonal flu spreads. Because the virus spread quickly around the world this new virus is called a pandemic flu (world-wide spread).

Most people who have become ill with this new virus have recovered without needing medical treatment but certain groups of people have gotten sick more often or are at higher risk of getting very sick from pandemic H1N1 flu including children less than 5 years of age and especially children less than 2 years old. Infants less than 6 months of age are a very high risk because they are too young to receive vaccine.

Getting a pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine, just like seasonal flu is the best protection from getting sick and protecting others from getting sick.

Children are a priority for receiving pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine. People who care for children including parents and childcare providers are also a high-priority group for getting a new influenza H1N1 vaccine.

The priority groups for pandemic H1N1 flu Vaccine are:

- Pregnant women,
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age,
- Health care and emergency services personnel
- Persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age, and
- People from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk of complications from pandemic H1N1 flu infection because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

Please check with your doctor or pharmacy for how you can receive a pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine. You can also check the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health website www.lapublichealth.lacounty.gov or call 2-1-1.

How pandemic H1N1 flu spreads

H1N1 Flu is spread the same way seasonal flu spreads- from person to person through coughing or sneezing, touching things with flu on them and then touching your face, mouth and eyes. You cannot catch H1N1 flu from eating pork or pork products.

Symptoms of pandemic H1N1 flu

Many of the symptoms are similar to seasonal flu and a common cold:

Fever (over 101°F, 38.3° * Dry cough * Sore throat * Headache * Body aches

Other symptoms of pandemic H1N1 flu include:

Nasal congestion * Chills * Tiredness and weakness * Diarrhea * Vomiting

If you have any of the following severe symptoms, go to your doctor immediately:**For children:**

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Dehydration; not able to drink enough liquids
- Not waking up, not interacting
- Confusion, being disoriented
- Fever and skin rash

For adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Treatment of pandemic H1N1 flu

Pandemic H1N1 flu is treated in the same way as regular flu – with good hygiene practices and plenty of rest at home, staying home away from work, school or childcare. Most people don't need medication to get better. If you have severe symptoms, your doctor may prescribe antivirals to prevent complications. People, who are sick with pandemic H1N1 flu need to rest, stay away from others, keep their fever down and drink lots of fluids.

Prevention of pandemic H1N1 flu

Do what you normally do to protect yourself against the flu. For example:

- Get a pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine, just like seasonal flu is the best protection from getting sick and protecting others from getting sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands frequently using water and soap for 20 seconds each time (the time it takes to sing *Happy Birthday* two times, at a normal speed). Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when water and soap aren't available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Unless you are sick, you do not need to wear a face mask. Some doctors offices will ask sick patients to wear a mask to prevent the patient from infecting others.
- If you or your child is sick, stay home or keep your child home so you can recover and avoid spreading illness to others.

Updated Guidance to Help Child Care and Early Childhood Programs respond to pandemic H1N1 flu

This guidance is in addition to the information and tools that are provided as part of the Pandemic Flu Toolkit for Early/Child Care Providers and Families.

Early childhood settings present unique challenges for infection control due children being at higher risk for illness, close contact with each other, shared toys and other objects, and their limited ability to understand or practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene. Below is guidance recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

Update your Pandemic Plan: Review current plans and procedures; develop plans to cover key positions when staff is absent from work and update contact information for families and staff. Early childhood providers should review and revise, if necessary, their sick leave policies to remove barriers to staff staying home while ill or to care for an ill family member. A doctor's note should not be required for children or staff to validate their illness or to return to the early childhood setting.

Educate your staff, children and families: Provide ongoing information on the importance of getting a flu vaccine, staying home when ill; hand hygiene; and respiratory etiquette. Educational materials (for example, posters) should be visible in the child care setting.

Get vaccinated against the flu: The best way to protect against the flu – seasonal or 2009 H1N1 – is to get vaccinated. All children and many staff in early childhood settings are in the priority groups for being the first to receive flu vaccine.

Stay home when sick: Children and caregivers with flu-like illness should remain at home and away from others until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater when measured orally), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Conduct daily health checks: Early childhood providers should observe all children and staff and talk with each child's parent or guardian and each child. He or she should look for changes in the child's behavior, a report of illness or recent visit to a health care provider, and any signs or symptoms of illness.

Separate ill children and staff: Children and staff who develop symptoms of flu-like illness while at the early childhood program should promptly be separated from others until they can be sent home. While this may be challenging for some home-based providers, they should provide a space where the child can be comfortable and supervised at all times. Staff members who develop illness while at work should wear a surgical mask when near other persons when possible and if they can tolerate it.

Encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette of everyone- both sick and well:

Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible; keep hands away from your nose, mouth, and eyes; and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available). For children with emerging self-care skills, parents and caregivers should closely monitor their respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene and remind children not to share cups or eating utensils.

Do routine cleaning: Areas and items that are visibly soiled should be cleaned immediately, and all areas should be regularly cleaned – with a particular focus on items that are more likely to have frequent contact with the hands, mouths, and bodily fluids of young children (for example, toys and play areas). CDC does not believe any additional disinfection beyond what is the normal routine for cleaning is necessary.

Childhood program closures: If flu transmission is high, public health officials may consider temporary closures with the goal of decreasing the spread of flu among children less than 5 years of age. The decision to selectively close should be made locally in partnership with the health department and should balance the risks of keeping the children in early childhood programs with the social and economic disruption that can result from closing.

Need more information?

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health website at www.publichealth.lacounty.gov or call 2-1-1

The California Department of Public Health website at www.cdph.ca.gov or hotline: 1-888-865-0564

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU