

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Alfredo Vigil, MD

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Department of Health Confirms H1N1 Influenza Cases in Kirtland, Los Alamos Schools State Expects Additional H1N1 Cases in New Mexico Schools

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health’s Scientific Laboratory confirmed today that one kindergartner from Kirtland Early Childhood Center near Farmington has H1N1 influenza. The 5-year-old female from San Juan County is hospitalized. Two students from Los Alamos Middle School also tested positive for H1N1. A school nurse from Los Alamos Middle School reported 80 students absent today.

“We expected to see H1N1 cases when students returned to school, and our advice remains the same,” said Health Secretary Alfredo Vigil, MD. “Parents and schools need to work together to make sure students who are sick with a fever, cough and/or sore throat stay away from others until 24 hours after their fever breaks without using a fever-reducing medication.”

The Department of Health works with the Public Education Department to make sure schools are doing what they can to reduce the spread of disease. The state departments developed and are distributing information to New Mexico schools that includes steps schools and teachers can take, hand hygiene advice, and advice for parents on how they can protect their children, including high-risk children; what they should do if school is dismissed and how to talk with children about the flu. The information is posted at <http://nmhealth.org/H1N1/school.shtml>.

“Prevention is the best line of defense for everyone,” said Education Secretary Veronica C. García. “Parents are reminded to follow guidelines about hand washing, covering coughing, and making plans to keep family members home who display flu-like symptoms. The Public Education Department will continue to work closely with Department of Health on this issue.”

The Department of Health will not test additional school cases for H1N1 unless patients are hospitalized. The Department is tracking hospitalized cases to see if there is a change in disease severity.

CDC’s guidance to schools is designed to keep schools open while they do what they can to protect students and staff. Recommendations include:

- The best ways to prevent influenza are getting vaccinated, frequent hand washing with soap and water when possible, covering noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and staying home when sick.
- Students and staff with flu-like illness should stay home and away from other people for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without using a fever-reducing medicine.
- School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach is unnecessary.
- Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from other students until they can be sent home.

The Department of Health recommends parents should check their children each morning for illness and keep children home if they have influenza-like illness (fever, cough, and/or sore throat). It's important for parents to keep their children at home for 24 hours after a fever breaks without using a fever-reducing medication. People should stay home from work if they are ill with influenza-like symptoms as well.

So far, there have been 27 hospitalizations and one death due to H1N1 in New Mexico. A 45-year-old woman in Sierra County who had a medical condition that put her at high risk for flu complications died earlier this month. For information on H1N1, look up <http://nmhealth.org/H1N1/index.shtml>.

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