

Date: 11 August 2009

To: School Nurses  
cc: School Administrators

From: Mary M. Ramos, MD, MPH  
School Health Officer, NM DOH

Re: **Rigorous Hand Hygiene Programs Can Prevent H1N1 Flu Transmission in the School Setting**

The ongoing H1N1 flu pandemic continues in NM as elsewhere in the US and world. Accordingly, if schools in NM have not already done so, they should put into place rigorous hand hygiene programs. Last year, a pilot project was conducted in 10 school districts (93 schools) across the state. Preliminary results from that pilot found that most school bathrooms were well stocked. However, about 10% of school bathrooms lacked soap and about 10% lacked paper towels/hand dryers. In addition, only 15% of school cafeterias had hand sanitizer available for students. A few school bathrooms (< 5%) were stocked with hand sanitizer. **Alcohol-containing hand sanitizers are very effective; however, for safety reasons they should be placed only in supervised settings.**

Please note the following three specific recommendations for rigorous hand hygiene programs in schools to prevent H1N1 transmission in the school setting:

1. **Keep school bathrooms appropriately stocked.**
  - a. Ensure student and staff bathrooms have soap and paper towels/hand dryers.
  - b. Implement programs in all schools to routinely monitor and restock the bathrooms.
2. **Install and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer in classrooms and cafeteria.**
  - a. Hand sanitizer used in class rooms has proven efficacy in disease prevention.
  - b. Instruct students and staff to use sanitizer when leaving or entering classrooms and after coughing or sneezing.
3. **Educate and promote hand hygiene in schools.**
  - a. Place signs in bathrooms, classrooms, and hallways to remind students and staff to wash and to use good cough and sneeze etiquette.
  - b. Educate teachers and all school staff of the importance of good hand hygiene.
  - c. Handwashing and/or hand sanitizing should be done frequently by everyone.
  - d. Samples of posters are included below.

Now is the time for schools in New Mexico to shore up this effective, safe, and relatively easy defense against the H1N1 flu virus. Working together to promote and implement hand hygiene programs at schools, we can keep our schools and communities healthier.

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- Germ Stopper Female (English)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials/GermStopper\\_girl\\_HR.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials/GermStopper_girl_HR.pdf)
- Germ Stopper Female (Spanish)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/es/pdf/GermStopper\\_girl\\_HR\\_es.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/es/pdf/GermStopper_girl_HR_es.pdf)
- Germ Stopper Male (English)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials/GermStopper\\_boy\\_HR.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials/GermStopper_boy_HR.pdf)
- Germ Stopper Male (Spanish)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/es/pdf/GermStopper\\_boy\\_HR\\_es.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/es/pdf/GermStopper_boy_HR_es.pdf)
- Cover your Cough (English)  
[http://www.health.state.nm.us/FLU/seasonal/DOCS/covercough\\_hcp8-5x11.pdf](http://www.health.state.nm.us/FLU/seasonal/DOCS/covercough_hcp8-5x11.pdf)
- Cover your cough (Spanish)  
[http://www.health.state.nm.us/FLU/seasonal/DOCS/swineflu\\_covercough\\_hcp8-5x11span.pdf](http://www.health.state.nm.us/FLU/seasonal/DOCS/swineflu_covercough_hcp8-5x11span.pdf)
- When to Wash Your Hands (English)  
[http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/When%20to%20wash%20poster\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/When%20to%20wash%20poster_Eng.pdf)
- When to Wash Your Hands (Spanish)  
[http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/When%20to%20wash%20poster\\_Span.pdf](http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/When%20to%20wash%20poster_Span.pdf)
- How to Wash Your Hands (English)  
[http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/How%20to%20wash%20poster\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/How%20to%20wash%20poster_Eng.pdf)
- How to Wash Your Hands (Spanish)  
[http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/How%20to%20wash%20poster\\_Span.pdf](http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/How%20to%20wash%20poster_Span.pdf)