

September 8, 2009

Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

Sick children need to stay home and out of school. Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children dismissed from school. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home. Talk to family, friends, neighbors, and community members to make a plan.

Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.

Be prepared to support home learning activities if the school makes them available. Your child's school may offer web-based lessons, instructional phone calls, and other types of distance learning. Have school materials, such as text books, workbooks, and homework packets available at home.

If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

Stay home if you or your child is sick until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever [100°F {37.8°C} or greater] or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.

Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.

Keep sick household members in a separate room (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.

Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Check with your doctor about any special care needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.

Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome

Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available to prevent your children from getting the flu.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

<http://www.flu.gov>

<http://nmhealth.org/H1N1/index.shtml>

<http://www.sde.state.nm.us/press/2009/h1n1/index.html>

Contact your healthcare provider or the New Mexico Nurse Advice Line at 1-877-725-2552 for more health information.

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