



April 28, 2009

Dear Parents,

This letter is to inform you that the Hempstead School District has entered a heightened surveillance stage resulting from the presence of a swine flu virus that is making people sick in several states, including New York State, and also in Mexico. Although, to date, only mild illness has occurred in the United States, we realize that many people are worried and we hope this letter will help address your concerns. Despite confirmed cases of swine flu in a private school in Queens, New York City, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open at this time.

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At this time, the state and local health departments have advised us that students can continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick and do not have flu symptoms. **Flu-like symptoms** include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. **Additional symptoms may be experienced with swine flu**, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

Flu spreads easily. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is important that your child does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. It is also important to teach your child how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.

Tips on avoiding this illness include:

- Washing your hand with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Using hand sanitizers properly. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizers.
- Remind your child to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Teach your child to cover their mouth and nose with tissues when coughing and sneezing.
- Help your child to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

While the current situation does not warrant school closure, if swine flu continues to spread and more students become ill, it may become necessary to close schools for a period of time. We are working with the Nassau County Health officials to monitor the situation in the Hempstead School District and will make all decisions in consultation with them. We will inform parents immediately if the situation changes and it becomes necessary to close schools.

If schools are closed, please do not have your child in close contact with other children—such as sending your child to a friend's home or group childcare—it is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to consider options in advance of the event of a school closing.

You may also get information and answers to your questions at the 24 hour toll-free hotline 1-800-808-1987, by paying attention to media reports or these websites: www.hempsteadschools.org, www.cdc.gov, www.nyhealth.gov, www.schoolhealthservicesny.com,

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joseph Laria
Superintendent