



PIMA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION, SUITE 1340
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(520) 243-7797 FAX (520) 791-0366

May 6, 2009

Dear Parents:

Together with your child's school, the Pima County Health Department is sending you information about the new H1N1 virus (so called "swine flu"). This letter will explain how this flu impacts your children, their school and what you can do to help.

The good news is we are learning this virus does not seem to be more dangerous than the seasonal flu we see in the winter time. While we know that seasonal influenza can make people very sick and some people do die from it, we do know that it's not necessary to close a school because someone is sick with this virus. As it is so widespread, closing a single school won't make a significant difference unless that individual school is experiencing high absences because students or faculty are sick.

Currently, the Pima County Health Department is not recommending school closures. We also do not recommend cancelling or withdrawing from school events such as field trips, a prom or graduation ceremonies. We will, however, continue to watch this ever-changing situation.

Your child's school will work with students on good hygiene and will monitor absentee rates. Importantly, we have asked your school to require sick children and/or staff to stay at home. Any student with flu-like illness (a moderate to high fever [100° or above], body aches, tired, cough, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat) **must** stay home at least 7 days after symptoms began or at least 24 hours without fever, *whichever is longer*.

Please help us to keep our community safe by teaching your children how to protect themselves and others from the flu or other diseases. Take 5 minutes today and talk with your children about the following:

1. **Good hand-washing:** teach them to either sing the "Happy Birthday" song or the "Alphabet" song for the length of time that they are scrubbing their hands with soap.
2. **Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve – not in hands:** when droplets of spit from a cough or sneeze land on your child's hands, a virus can spread easily to you or classmates. (Don't forget to wash hands after using a tissue.)
3. **Keeping hands away from eyes, noses and mouths:** viruses such as flu travel into the body through places like our eyes, nose and mouth. Teach your child to keep their hands away from these places.

Above all, DO NOT send your child to school if sick.

We are all in this together. Whether your child and other family members become ill with this new virus (or other viruses) will depend to a great degree on how well these simple hygiene measures are followed. You can also log onto www.pimahealth.org to obtain informational updates and links to additional resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle McDonald".

Michelle McDonald, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer