



Guidance for Preventing Transmission of Influenza in Child Care Centers

November 6, 2009

These recommendations apply only when influenza viruses are circulating in New York City. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) provides this guidance based on the best current information. Recommendations may change, and New York City recommendations may sometimes differ from those issued by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: visit www.nyc.gov/flu for frequently updated information.

Child care service operators have an important role in preventing the spread of influenza infection in the community. This guidance can help child care facilities stop the spread of both seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza and preserve normal activities with the least possible disruption.

Actions child care operators can take

- Encourage vaccination against seasonal influenza for all children 6 months of age and older and for all staff
- Encourage vaccination against H1N1 influenza for all children and for all staff responsible for the care of infants less than 6 months of age. Exclude all children and staff with flu-like illness, which is defined as a fever of 100°F or higher with cough or sore throat until they have been free of fever for 24 hours without the use of medicine. Instruct parents to keep sick children at home.
- Reinforce the importance of basic infection control measures, such as good hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and good housekeeping rules.
- Report clusters of 5 or more individuals (children and/or staff) with flu-like illness **while attending the child care center in a single day**. Do not report children or staff who stayed home or were turned away at the beginning of the day.
- Encourage parents of children and staff with underlying conditions (see Section A) to call their health care provider to determine if preventive treatment is needed. Treatment is most effective if started within 48 hours of exposure to influenza.

Vaccination for children and adults

- Vaccination is the best way to protect children and staff from the flu.
 - Encourage staff to get vaccinated, particularly staff who take care of children less than 6 months of age, against both seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza.
 - Encourage parents and other close contacts of children less than 5 years old, especially less than 6 months of age, to get vaccinated against seasonal influenza. Close contacts of children less than 6 months of age should also be vaccinated against novel H1N1 influenza.
- Priority groups for seasonal influenza vaccination include:

- All children 6 months through 18 years, especially less than 5 years of age
- Pregnant women
- People aged 50 years and older, especially those 65 and older
- Health care workers
- Adults with chronic health conditions (see Section A)
- Anyone who take cares of children less than 5 years of age, especially less than 6 months of age
- Household contacts and caregivers of children less than 5 years of age, especially less than 6 months of age
- Household contacts of adults aged 50 years and older or adults with chronic health conditions (see Section A)
- Novel H1N1 vaccine is currently recommended for the following groups:
 - Pregnant women
 - Anyone 6 months through 24 years of age
 - Anyone who lives with or cares for children less than 6 months old
 - All health care workers
 - Anyone 25 through 64 years of age who has an underlying health condition that increases risk of severe illness or complications (see Section A)

For more information on the influenza vaccine or to find out where someone can go to get vaccinated call 311 or visit [Health Bulletin: Prevent Influenza - Get Vaccinated!](#)

Excluding children and staff with flu-like illness from the child care center

- Remind parents not to send their children to the child care center if they have flu-like illness (fever of 100°F or higher with cough or sore throat)
- Ensure that policies and procedures for identifying and sending ill children and staff home are established and consistently applied.
- Exclude sick children and staff who present flu-like illness or other illness at the beginning of the day as required by Article 47 of the Health code.
- Contact the parents of children who develop flu-like illness during the day and ask that they be picked up and brought home as soon as possible.
 - Note the symptoms of all sick children before they are sent home. When possible, take their temperature.
- Keep all individuals with fever and cough or sore throat away from others until their caretaker comes to pick them up.
- If at all possible, the ill child or staff member should return home by taxi or private car and not on public transportation.

Returning to the child care center

- Children and staff with flu-like illness should stay home until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen).
- A health care provider note should NOT be required to return to the child care center.
- Children with mild illness should NOT be sent to the emergency room.

Cough and sneeze etiquette and hand washing guidance

Reinforce the importance of covering coughs and sneezes, and of washing hands frequently.

- Teach children and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the inside of an elbow. Cough or sneeze into sleeves—not hands!

- Maintain hand washing facilities and supplies, including soap, and paper towels - make sure they are readily accessible.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used if hands are not visibly soiled.
 - Supervise young children when using these products.
 - Read all product labels and follow instructions carefully.
 - Do not use these products for children younger than 2 years of age.
- Child care center staff should set a good example and practice frequent hand washing and cough etiquette.

Housekeeping guidance

- Staff should perform routine and effective cleaning. Areas and items that are visibly soiled should be cleaned immediately, and all areas should be regularly cleaned – with a particular focus on items that are more likely to have frequent contact with the hands, mouths, and bodily fluids of young children.
- Provide wastebaskets for used tissues and towels. Place them in visible locations, and empty them regularly.
- Programs should maintain proper ventilation. Ventilation systems should be maintained in good working order.

Maintaining records and reporting clusters of ill children and staff

1. Create a listing of everyone sent home with fever and respiratory illness and include current contact information in case they need further follow up by DOHMH.
2. Report clusters of 5 or more individuals (children or staff) with flu-like illness **while attending the child care center in a single day**. Do not report children or staff who stayed home or were turned away at the beginning of the day. Notify the Bureau of Child Care at 212-676-2444 (fax 212-676-2424).
3. DOHMH will determine whether further investigation is needed or further actions by a child care operator are recommended after reviewing relevant information reported by the center as described below.

Additional resources on preventing the spread of flu in child care settings include:

- United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/childcare/guidance.htm.
- NYS Department of Health:
www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/schools_and_child_care_providers.
- Educational posters in many languages are available for download by clicking the link "[Brochures & Posters](#)".

Resources for Parents and Staff

- Guidance for Home Isolation:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/cd-h1n1flu-homeisolation-new.pdf>
- Health Bulletin: Get Vaccinated!
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/public/dohmhnews8-08.pdf>

Section A: Health conditions that increase the risk for severe influenza

- Pregnancy
- Live birth, miscarriage, or abortion in the past 2 weeks
- Age younger than 2 years
- Age 65 years or older
- Lung disease, such as asthma or emphysema
- Heart, liver, or kidney disease, except hypertension
- Blood disease, such as sick cell anemia
- Diabetes or other metabolic disorder
- Weakened immune system (caused by HIV or by cancer or medication)
- Seizure, neuromuscular conditions, spinal cord injury, cognitive dysfunction, and other disorders that may cause problems breathing or clearing mucus
- Long-term aspirin therapy in children less than 19 years old because of the risk of Reye syndrome)