



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Thomas Farley, MD, MPH  
*Commissioner*

## Guidance for Responding to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education: 2010-2011 Academic Year

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**This guidance can help stop the spread of seasonal influenza among students, faculty, and staff within institutions of higher education (IHEs). Check [nyc.gov/flu](http://nyc.gov/flu) often to find out when influenza activity increases.**

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that spreads mainly through droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Approximately 1,100 New Yorkers die of seasonal influenza every year.

When students, faculty or staff get sick with influenza, the virus can spread within the institution and in the larger community. To help stop the spread of influenza, the New York City Health Department advises IHEs to:

1. Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for institutions of higher education.
2. Provide or promote vaccination against seasonal influenza.
3. Implement and promote basic influenza-prevention measures.
4. Report clusters of influenza-like illness – fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius) or higher, accompanied by cough or sore throat – to the Health Department.
5. Know the basics about influenza.
6. Stay informed by checking [nyc.gov/flu](http://nyc.gov/flu) for updates.

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### 1. Follow CDC recommendations for responding to influenza.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer strategies, protocols and detailed explanations and instruction to help institutions curb the spread of influenza. These guidelines – available online at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance) – include:

- CDC Guidance for Responses to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009-2010 Academic Year.
- Technical Report on CDC Guidance for Responses to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009-2010 Academic Year.
- Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Institutions of Higher Education.

## **2. Provide or promote vaccination to prevent seasonal influenza.**

- IHEs without medical clinics should advise students to get the seasonal vaccines from their doctors, or from one of the vaccination centers set up across the city. Visit [nyc.gov/flu](https://nyc.gov/flu) for locations.

## **3. Implement and promote basic influenza-prevention measures.**

- Promote vaccination.
- Encourage students, faculty, and staff to cover their mouths and noses when coughing or sneezing and to wash their hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Advise students, faculty, and staff to stay home (out of class and away from school-related activities) until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Advise students, faculty, and staff to call a doctor right away if they have any of the following risk factors and either have influenza-like illness or have been in close contact with someone else who does:
  - ✓ Pregnancy
  - ✓ Women who have given birth, or had a miscarriage or abortion in the past 2 weeks
  - ✓ Age younger than 2 or older than 64
  - ✓ Asthma or any other chronic respiratory diseases
  - ✓ Heart, kidney, or liver disease, except hypertension
  - ✓ Hematologic diseases, such as sickle cell anemia
  - ✓ Metabolic disorders, such as diabetes
  - ✓ Weakened immune system, from illness or medication
  - ✓ Neuromuscular disorders that interfere with breathing or the discharge of mucus
  - ✓ Long-term aspirin therapy (in people under 19 years of age)

## **4. Report clusters of influenza-like illness to the Health Department.**

- The Health Department wants to hear about any outbreaks of influenza-like illness in university and college settings until there is evidence of citywide transmission of influenza. Call 212-788-9830 to report any outbreaks. Once citywide transmission has been confirmed, there is no reason to report clusters, except to request guidance on managing the outbreak.
- Report initial clusters of influenza-like illness in 5 or more students, faculty, or staff members. For example, a cluster might include people living in the same dormitory or other group setting, or who share common work space.

## **5. Stay informed. Visit [nyc.gov/flu](https://nyc.gov/flu) for updates.**

- Check New York City information and recommendations (which may sometimes differ from national CDC guidelines).

- Obtain public-education materials in English and other languages, including “Cover Your Cough” and “Wash Your Hands” posters, and Health Bulletin #75: “Prevent Influenza – Get Vaccinated!”
- Review weekly surveillance updates – posted every Friday – to track trends in influenza-like illness, including which seasonal viruses are circulating in the city.
- Find complete information on the seasonal vaccine, including how to order vaccine, who should be vaccinated, and where to get a flu vaccine, including free or low-cost vaccines.

## **6. Know the basics about seasonal influenza.**

- Like any influenza virus, seasonal influenza is spread mainly through respiratory droplets that are released when an infected person sneezes or coughs. People in close (within 3 feet) proximity can become infected if these droplets contact their mouth, nose, or eyes, or if they touch a person or surface with virus on it (like a door knob or telephone receiver) and then touch their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- IHEs can reduce the spread of influenza by excluding students and staff from classes and all other school-related activities while they are ill.
- Most people with influenza-like illness do not need to be tested for influenza. If there is an outbreak at an institution before community-wide influenza transmission begins in New York City, influenza testing at the Health Department’s laboratory may be available to help determine the cause of the outbreak.

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