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Mayor

**Department of
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Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
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Joel I. Klein
Chancellor

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Dear School Community:

This is to inform you that three schools in Queens – 29Q238, 24Q016, and 24Q005 – will close for at least five school days starting tomorrow, Friday, May 15. These schools have experienced unusually high levels of influenza-like illness in recent days. We are also seeing an increase in flu activity in Queens more generally. We hope that these temporary closures will prevent new infections and avoid unnecessary illness.

As you may already know, there are three different strains of influenza currently circulating in New York City: two seasonal viruses that arrived last fall and the new swine origin H1N1 virus, which this year's vaccine does not prevent. So far, the symptoms of the new H1N1 flu have closely resembled those of seasonal flu, but *any* influenza virus can cause severe illness, so we are taking aggressive precautions.

Besides suspending classes at schools experiencing unusual clusters of illness, the Health Department advises students, staff and their family members to seek medical advice if they belong to any of the higher-risk groups listed below and think they have had close contact with someone who has the flu during the past week:

- People over 65 or under 2 years of age
- People with chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver or blood disorders
- People with immune systems that are compromised (either due to illness or medicines)
- Pregnant women
- People on long-term aspirin therapy

Individuals in these categories may be advised by their doctors to take preventive medications such as Tamiflu or Relenza. However, most people who get the flu do not need to seek medical care and do not need to be tested for H1N1 flu. The Health Department recommends testing only for people who are in the hospital. Most people who get the flu should stay home.

The best way to prevent additional cases of flu in our schools is to ensure that people with symptoms stay home. If your child has a fever, accompanied by cough or sore throat, please do not send the child back to school until 24 hours after the symptoms resolve.

Sincerely,