

# MONTEREY COUNTY



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH LEN FOSTER, Director

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## Press Release

August 24, 2009

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## Back to School and the Flu

*Cases of pandemic A H1N1 influenza continue to be seen in our community*

The kids are back in school and in addition to notebooks, crayons and pencils they can also be carrying flu and cold germs. This year parents may be especially concerned due to H1N1/swine flu. The Monterey County Health Department understands that parents and caregivers are concerned and would like to offer an update as well as some tips about preventing the spread of germs.

“Currently, H1N1/swine flu is a lot like seasonal flu. Most people who get it have only a mild illness, and most get better on their own without medicine,” said Dr. Hugh Stallworth, Health Officer for Monterey County, “As with the seasonal flu, some people are more likely to get seriously ill if they come down with the flu. Those at high risk of becoming seriously ill include children under 2, adults over 65, pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes or asthma.”

### *Prevent the spread of germs*

There are simple actions that individuals can take to help prevent the spread of germs in our community:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbows or sleeves. Coughing into hands can spread germs to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Get seasonal flu vaccinations for the entire family.
- Stay home from school or work if sick. Return to work or school when your fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications like Tylenol

### **The symptoms of influenza are:**

- ✓ Fever- low (99°) to high (104°), usually for 3 days, but may persist for 4 to 8 days. Sometimes fever will go away and return a day later
- ✓ Aching muscles
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Joint aches
- ✓ Eye pain
- ✓ Feeling very cold or having shaking chills
- ✓ Feeling very tired
- ✓ Sore throat, runny or stuffy nose

*Keep the flu from spreading*

In order to keep the flu from spreading, the most important thing is to keep sick people away from healthy people. So if your child is sick, keep your child home. Staying home when sick stops the spread of the flu and helps the sick person get well.

Before you send your child to school ask yourself:

1. Does my child have a **fever** (at least 100° F or 37. 7°C)? If you don't have a thermometer, feel your child's skin with your hand. If it is much warmer than usual your child probably has a fever.
2. Does my child have a **sore throat, cough, body aches, vomiting, or diarrhea**?
  - **If you answered “yes” to both questions above**, your child might have the flu. Keep your child home from school until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications like Tylenol.
  - **If you answered “yes” to only one of the questions above**, keep your child home from school until symptoms are gone for 24 hours.

*When to call your health care provider*

Call your health care provider if your child is ill enough that you would normally see a health care provider. Use the same judgment you would use during a normal flu season. If you would not usually see a health care provider for the symptoms your child has now, you do not need to see a health care provider.

*When to take someone to the hospital*

- If the person is short of breath or breathing rapidly at rest
- If the person's skin is dusky or bluish in color
- If the person is disoriented (“out of it”)
- If the person is so dizzy or weak that standing is difficult (in a person who was able to walk before the illness)
- If the person has not urinated in 12 or more hours

Additional information about H1N1 is available by calling Monterey County 211.

Dr. Stallworth advises residents to monitor news reports and check the Monterey County Web site at [www.co.monterey.ca.us](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us) or [www.cdc.gov/h1n1](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1) for additional information.

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