

April 28, 2009

Dear Parents,

New Mexico is carefully monitoring the situation with swine influenza virus that is making people sick in several states, and also in Mexico and other countries. To date there have been no confirmed cases in New Mexico. So far, only mild illness has occurred in the United States, we realize that many people are worried and we hope this letter will help address your concerns. We believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open at this time.

At this time, the New Mexico Department of Health has advised us that students can continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick.

Flu spreads easily. Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is important that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol and if the hands are not visibly soiled. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands! If a tissue is used, it should be thrown out immediately.
- Help your children to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of swine flu in our school at this time.

Closing schools is not needed at this time; however, if swine flu continues to spread it may become necessary to close schools for a period of time. We will let parents know immediately if the situation changes and it becomes necessary to close schools.

If schools are closed, please do not make arrangements—such as sending children to a friend's home or group childcare—that will put them in close contact with other children. It is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to consider options in advance of the event of a school closing.

You can get information at www.cdc.gov/swineflu, http://nmhealth.org/FLU/seasonal/swine_flu.html, or the Swine Flu hotline at 1-866-850-5893.

Thank you for your help in keeping our children and our schools healthy.