

May 4, 2009

Dear Lexington One Parents:

I know that you are hearing a lot about the Swine-Origin Influenza right now. Many of you have called or e-mailed asking us or staff at our schools about this flu. As I write this, Lexington County School District One has no cases of swine flu. However, at some point we probably will.

As we do with any communicable disease, from lice and chicken pox to meningitis and whooping cough, we continue to work closely with the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and their Regional Epi Nurse, and we follow their guidelines.

We are fortunate to have a registered nurse in each of our schools. These school nurses see sick students every day and are very experienced and knowledgeable. If they see students with flu-like illnesses, they send those students home and ask their parents to have them tested, if necessary, and in accordance with district and DHEC guidelines.

Our nurses and our teachers also regularly emphasize health, hygiene and safety. At the elementary schools, in particular, they talk about the importance of frequent hand washing, good hand washing technique and good cough technique in order to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.

Swine flu is a contagious disease caused by a virus that attacks the respiratory tract in humans (nose, throat and lungs) and is different from a cold. In fact, the symptoms of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular flu. Colds usually begin slowly. They start with a scratchy, sore throat, then sneezing and a runny nose. The flu usually comes on very suddenly and often begins with a headache, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, sweating, chills, watery eyes and extreme fatigue. Individuals with the flu usually have a temperature of 100° F or higher.

Flu spreads when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes or talks sending the virus into the air. Other people then inhale the virus, which enters the nose, throat or lungs of a person and begins to multiply, causing symptoms of influenza. Less often, flu spreads when a person touches a surface that has flu viruses on it — a door handle, for instance — and then touches his or her nose or mouth. Once an individual is exposed to the virus, it takes one to four days (on average two days) for that individual to develop symptoms.

Adults can pass the flu virus to others up to one day before and three to seven days after symptoms start. Children can pass the virus for longer than seven days after their symptoms begin.

We will probably see the flu around for a few more months and wanted to take a moment to remind you of some things you can do to help your child avoid the flu.

- In order to keep your child well, remind him to wash his hands often and thoroughly. Tell him to wash his hands long enough to sing the ABC song.
- Tell your child to cover his cough with his sleeve not his hand.
- Tell your child not to touch his face, eyes or mouth.
- Tell your child not to share his food, drink or eating utensils with others.
- Be sure your child gets a good night's sleep and drinks plenty of fluids (especially ones with Vitamin C).
- Makes sure your child eats breakfast and eats a protein-enriched lunch.

As you know, a sick child does not perform well in class and can expose his classmates to his virus or other illness. If your child complains that he doesn't feel well, please check his temperature before sending him to school. If he has a fever of 100 degrees or more before you give him Tylenol, Advil, Motrin or some other appropriate fever reducing medication, keep your child at home. (Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms and particularly fever without first speaking to your doctor. Giving aspirin to children and teenagers who have the flu can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.)

We need your help here, too. If your child is sick with flu-like symptoms (temperature of 100 degrees or more, sore throat, cough), please keep him home and call your school's nurse or attendance clerk and let them know. DHEC is asking that we track all possible cases of flu-like illnesses.

Your child should not return to school until he has been fever free without the help of Tylenol or another product for 24 hours.

When your child does come back to school, he should go by the nurse's office and have his temperature checked before he goes to his classroom.

Finally, we know how important your children are to you. Make sure that your child's school has your current emergency telephone numbers. Our nurses sometimes have trouble reaching a parent/guardian. Obviously, you want to know when your child is sick so that you can pick him up, and you don't want your sick child spending hours in the health room because we can't reach you.

We have much of this information and other information on our Web site, and we will continue to post new information as necessary.

Should an outbreak eventually occur in Lexington County School District One and cause us to close school, cancel events or take other precautionary measures, we will let you know as soon as possible.

Take a moment now to talk with your child and your childcare provider, if applicable, about what you want them to do should Lexington One close school due to swine flu.

If you have any questions about this or about any other matter, please do not hesitate to give me a call at 821-1000. Our primary concern is always the health and safety of our students and staff.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karen C. Woodward
Superintendent