

May 28, 2009

Dear Parent,

New Hanover County Health Department has received confirmation that novel H1N1 influenza has been identified in children attending New Hanover County Schools. This letter is being sent to parents to stress the importance of taking preventative steps to control the transmission of this virus

New Hanover County Schools will remain open despite the confirmation of H1N1 influenza cases. School and Health officials are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

At this time, the local health department has advised us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school. Dr. Lerch, Superintendent said, " School will remain open. "

The main way influenza viruses are spread is from person to person when they cough or sneeze.

To keep influenza from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with influenza –like symptoms or respiratory illness will be sent home.

Influenza-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.) cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may be experienced with H1N1 influenza, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

If you suspect your child is getting the influenza, it is essential 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 the virus. Do not give aspirin containing products. Please call your child's health care provider for further instructions.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of novel H1N1 influenza as they would colds or other seasonal influenza by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (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.
- Teach your children to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
- Teach your children to stay at least six feet from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

If you have further questions, please contact New Hanover County Health Department at 910-798-6684.

You may also get information at www.ncpublichealth.com or the North Carolina CARE Line free number: English or Spanish call-1 -800-662-7030.