



# OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

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## **Preventing Influenza in Schools in the Archdiocese of New York**

*Information for Pastors, Parents, Teachers, and School Principals*

Routine infection-control measures are effective at preventing the spread of the flu. The steps needed to control influenza in our schools are simple. By keeping your children home when they're sick, and teaching them the importance of washing hands and covering coughs, you can help keep your children healthy.

### **How can I help prevent the spread of Influenza at home and at school?**

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (roughly the time it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their faces and to avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the inside of an elbow. Cough or sneeze into sleeves—not hands!
- Help children learn these healthy habits by setting a good example yourself.
- **Do not send your child to school if he or she has a fever with cough or sore throat.** Students kept home with flu-like symptoms should stay out of school until their symptoms are improving and their temperature is normal (98.6° F) for at least 24 hours.
- Children sent home from school with a fever and a cough or sore throat should not return to school until at least one full day has passed since they were symptom-free.

### **What should I do if my child is sick?**

- Do not send your child to school if he or she has a fever of 100 degrees or higher, with cough or sore throat. The great majority of children recover from influenza quickly without treatment, but those with chronic underlying health conditions should call a doctor about receiving antiviral treatment.
- Children at higher risk include those with asthma, diabetes, neurological conditions or weakened immune systems. Any child with signs of severe illness – such as fast breathing or trouble breathing – should receive medical attention immediately.

### **When can my child return to school if he or she has been out with influenza?**

- Students kept home with flu-like symptoms should stay out of school until their symptoms are improving and their temperature is normal for at least 24 hours. Children sent home from school because of fever with cough or sore throat should not return to school until at least one full day has passed symptom-free.

### **What can parents do to prepare for the fall influenza season?**

- Arrange for child-care in advance, in case your children get sick and need to stay home.
- Get information about H1N1 and seasonal vaccines and discuss the options with your health care provider.
- If your child becomes ill during the school day, it is important we know how to reach you. Please remember to give your up-to-date contact information to your child's school. And be sure to inform your school principal or nurse if your child has a chronic health condition, such as asthma or diabetes.

For more information about influenza and how to protect your family, you can always call 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov/flu](http://www.nyc.gov/flu).

### **Do I need to get my child vaccinated against seasonal flu?**

Health agencies strongly urges students to get vaccinated against seasonal influenza early in the school year. The seasonal vaccine is already available in many doctors' offices. It is safe and effective against the most common strains of influenza. Families are encouraged to consult with their physician or health care provider.

Families living in New York City that lack health care coverage can get free or low-cost vaccine from public clinics and other sites throughout the city.

### **Do I need to get my child vaccinated against H1N1 influenza?**

Parents should consult their physicians and local health authority for guidance on whether the H1N1 vaccine is right for their children.

The decision is voluntary, but the New York City Health Department strongly encourages all parents to get their children immunized against H1N1 influenza when vaccine becomes available this fall. For information on where to get children vaccinated, call 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov/flu](http://www.nyc.gov/flu).

### **Will students be vaccinated at the schools of the Archdiocese of New York?**

At this time, there are no plans to distribute or administer H1N1 vaccinations in the Archdiocesan Schools of New York. When H1N1 vaccine becomes available, we will provide information to parents who wish to make this choice.

### **How will parental consent for vaccination be obtained?**

If a parent chooses to vaccinate their child, consent forms will be posted online, at [www.nyc.gov/flu](http://www.nyc.gov/flu). Timing and logistics will depend on the supply of H1N1 vaccine and the availability of health agencies to administer it. No child will be vaccinated without the consent of a parent or guardian.

### **How will the Archdiocese of New York handle school closures this school year?**

Schools don't normally close on account of influenza. Now that H1N1 is better understood, experts agree that conventional infection-control measures are more appropriate than school closure.

As long as it is in the best interests of our students and faculty, schools in the Archdiocese of New York will stay open when the flu returns. We will work with pastors, principals, teachers and parents to help reduce the spread of influenza within schools.

### **Should I keep my healthy child home from school to prevent infection?**

Healthy children do not need to miss school, but those who develop fever with cough or sore throat should be kept home until 24 hours after the fever clears.

For additional information, call 311 in New York City or visit [www.nyc.gov/flu](http://www.nyc.gov/flu), or <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

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