

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

30 Park Street • P.O. Box 600

Vernon, CT 06066-0600

Fax (860) 870-6008



October 1, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The purpose of this letter is to update you on the swine influenza (flu) situation and share public health recommendations that have been made to address it.

In Vernon, we have had a very nice start to another school year. Although it was a very close call, three of our schools which were scheduled for major construction work this past summer opened on time.

Now that we are all “back into the school routine,” we wish that we could devote all of our energies towards improving the educational experiences for all of our students. While we are committed to that goal, I must admit that another new and unfamiliar challenge faces us, namely the H1N1 flu.

At this time, the state and local health departments have advised us that students can continue to attend school, as long as they are not sick and do not have flu-like symptoms, without the use of fever-reducing medications. Flu-like symptoms include fever (over 100 degrees F.), cough, sore throat, runny nose or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms that may be experienced with swine flu, include muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

If your child is experiencing any flu-like symptoms, it is important that he or she remain home until the child has gotten better and has been without fever or signs of a fever for at least 24 hours. In order to reduce the spread of germs, you should avoid taking your children to public gatherings such as the mall or sporting events while they are sick. It is also important to teach your children how to reduce the risk of getting the flu and how to protect others from infection. A one-page fact sheet, ***Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs*** has already been distributed to you. If you should desire an additional copy, please contact the nurse who works at the school that your child attends.

General tips for decreasing the spread of germs include:

- Most important: washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If water is not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if a tissue is not available, the crook of the arm).

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- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.
- Carefully dispose of the tissues in a wastebasket, and then wash your hands.
- Do not share drinking cups or food.

We are consulting with local health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control in our buildings should a case of swine flu occur.

Should the number of staff or student absences severely limit our ability to maintain appropriate and safe educational opportunities, we will consider adjustments to school calendars only after consultation with local health and other appropriate authorities. If schools should be closed, students should be kept home. Avoid visiting public gatherings or making arrangements for your children to visit a friend's home, group childcare, or another setting that will put them in close contact with other children. We understand that this may be a challenge for your family, and recommend you plan ahead in case of a school closing.

Please stay informed. For information about swine flu, visit the DPH's web site at <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu>, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/flu/swine.

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

Sincerely,

Richard J. Paskiewicz
Interim Superintendent of Schools

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Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

Fact Sheet

1. Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2. Stay home when you are sick.

Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.

3. Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

4. Wash your hands often.

Washing your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.