

## Swine Flu and You

### **The World Health Organization has raised the level of the H1N1 flu pandemic to 6. Does this change anything?**

The WHO declaration has no impact on our advice for residents in Westchester. It has not changed the CDC's recommendations for individuals and communities. Raising the pandemic level to six is just an indication of spread and not of severity.

Swine flu is having the same effect as regular flu on our community so far. Almost all people who have had confirmed cases of swine flu have had mild illnesses and have recovered on their own, at home, in about a week.

You and your family should take the usual precautions to avoid illness. Wash hands often, cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, dispose of used tissues properly and avoid people who are sick.

While most cases of swine flu have involved only mild illness, flu spreads easily. Symptoms of flu-like illness include: fever, cough, sore throat or runny nose. Some additional symptoms that may be experienced with swine flu include muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

### **What should I do if I think I or a family member may have the flu?**

Stay home from school, camp or work for 24 hours after your symptoms go away, except for a cough which may linger. Also avoid shopping malls, movie theaters, sporting events and other places where people could be exposed to your flu germs. We know that this is inconvenient, but it is the best way to limit the spread of the flu to others.

### **Who needs medicine for the flu?**

if you have flu symptoms or if you have close contact with someone who has the flu and you are over age 65, under age two, pregnant, or have asthma or another chronic health problem, call your doctor right away to see if you need medicine, Your doctor may be able to give you a prescription over the phone.

**When should I go to the emergency room?**

You don't need to go to an emergency room unless you have severe symptoms such as trouble breathing, rapid breathing in children, pain or pressure in the chest or stomach, bluish skin color, dizziness or confusion, increasing fever, or vomiting that won't stop.

**I have heard that there is a lot of flu in my child's school or camp. What should I do and what should the school or camp do?**

If your child is well, he or she should attend. There is no need to close schools or camps unless flu absences are so widespread that they interfere with the ability of the school or camp to function. Students, faculty and staff with flu-like illness (fever with cough or sore throat) should stay home for at least seven days, even if symptoms resolve sooner. Those who are sick should stay home until at least 24 hours after their symptoms have resolved apart from a lingering cough.

**Does it matter what kind of flu I have?**

No. Because of the public's concerns about swine flu, the Health Department has learned of many more people who have the regular flu than might be expected at this time of year. The treatment for mild cases of regular flu and swine flu is the same: rest and remain at home and drink plenty of fluids. Most people with mild symptoms will recover on their own without treatment or any need for a flu test.

More than half of the flu clusters that have been reported to the Health Department by schools have turned out to be cases of children with a virus or regular flu. The Health Department has worked with school health officials to determine the cause of student absences. In the majority of cases where health or school officials have interviewed parents, the students had stayed home because of flu fear, not because they were sick.

**How can I keep myself and my family healthy?**

Everyone can help prevent flu from spreading by washing their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, covering their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a tissue, disposing of used tissues properly and staying away from people who are sick.

**For more information, visit our website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health)**