

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Human Swine Flu Information Sheet

Australia is entering a new phase in our response to human swine flu, known as PROTECT.

The change in approach is because the virus strain is currently not as virulent as anticipated.

Generally the virus produces a mild disease in most people, a severe disease in some, and a moderate effect overall.

This year it is likely many more people will come down with flu-like-illnesses than in recent winter flu seasons because fewer people will have immunity to the human swine flu virus.

The aims of the **PROTECT** phase are to ensure that people at an increased risk of complications from influenza are treated early to try to prevent severe illness from developing, and to help control outbreaks in schools and other institutions.

On the advice of NSW Health we no longer need to exclude staff or students who have been to an area where there is known community or school transmission of human swine flu.

Any staff member or student who has been excluded from school and who does not have flu symptoms can return to school immediately.

The school exclusion policy was inconvenient but it helped to limit the spread of disease in NSW schools.

As the number of cases of swine flu increases in the community, school exclusions and closures are unlikely to help in limiting the spread of disease as many more children will catch swine flu outside school rather than in school.

The NSW Department of Health thanks the parents and carers of NSW school students for their co-operation with these measures while they were in place.

We still need to take steps to minimise the transmission of the virus in the community as some people in our school community remain at increased risk of complications from influenza.

Instead of excluding people who may have been to an affected area, or who have been in contact with a person with confirmed human swine influenza, we will now be asking any person with flu symptoms to stay at home until they are well.

Any student who identifies that they are unwell, or is displaying flu-like symptoms will be sent to a sick-bay area and their parent or carer will be called to take them home.

Please watch carefully for any signs or symptoms of flu-like illness in your child. These symptoms include fever, cough, tiredness, muscle aches, sore throat, chills or shortness of breath. NSW Health has advised if you or your child develops flu-like symptoms you should seek the advice of your family doctor as you would with any other illness.

Parents have an important role to play in helping their children understand and follow the government hygiene advice. Your help to do this is appreciated.

We understand there may be some ongoing concern in school communities. However, we can reassure you that we have taken, and will continue to act on advice we receive from NSW Health to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and students.

You can get additional health information from the H1N1 Influenza 09 section of the NSW Health website at: <http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/index.asp>.