

BUENA VISTA SCHOOL DISTRICT R-31

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

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4/30/09

SWINE FLU - NOW CALLED H1N1 INFLUENZA PARENTS SHOULD PREPARE

Dear Parents,

As you are probably aware, our nation is on alert due to an outbreak of influenza, referred to as Swine Flu. In the past few days, public health officials have begun to refer to this flu more specifically as H1N1 Influenza. As of this writing, there are still **NO** confirmed cases [by laboratory testing] of the H1N1 Influenza in Colorado. (Update 5/1/09- According to CO Department of Public Health –CDPHE News Release, there are now 2 confirmed cases in Colorado. The News Release also states this flu is acting like the usual seasonal flu, as a relatively mild disease, though a spectrum of illness is expected.)

Parents are asked, however, to begin thinking about the possibility of school closures, in preparation, if the flu virus continues to spread. The school district and Chaffee County Public Health officials are working together monitoring the situation and parents will be updated with any important information as quickly as possible.

Here at school, the Buena Vista staff continues to promote good hygiene practices with students, school nurses are closely monitoring all students seen in the health office, and maintenance staff continues to ensure the cleanliness of the school environment.

Parents should take action to protect their children and help prevent the spread of the flu. Parents should, however, also plan ahead in the event a local health emergency is declared and schools are required to close.

To keep flu from spreading to more people, we ask that you keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with flu-like symptoms or respiratory illness will be sent home, especially if they are found to have a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit, regardless of travel or exposure evidence.

Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), cough, sore throat, runny nose, stuffy nose, chills, body aches and/or fatigue. Additional symptoms that may be experienced with swine flu include vomiting and/or diarrhea. If you suspect your child is getting sick, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the stores, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable. You should see your physician if you notice these symptoms, especially if there is fever. You cannot get this influenza from eating pork. As with all viral illness, a person is contagious until all symptoms have gone. The cause for heightened concern is that there is no vaccine available for this influenza yet, and infection is occurring in other countries right now, also.

If H1N1 Influenza continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials advise that it may become necessary to close schools for a period of time. This is a good time to make sure your family is prepared for an emergency that might require you to stay at home for several days, including having enough food, water and other necessities. If working parents must still work, childcare plans will also need to be made. Having thought through a plan will help you tremendously, if the need to act arises.

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

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- 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. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. That’s the same distance as a yardstick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Again, this is an evolving situation. The district continues to receive regular information and support from the County & State Departments of Health, the State Education Department and the Centers for Disease Control. We will keep you updated with pertinent information as it becomes available.

For more information on swine flu, you can visit the following websites:

www.cdc.gov/swineflu/index.htm

www.cdphe.state.co.us

www.pandemicflu.gov

Or call:

Colorado Helpline (CO HELP) at 1-877-462-2911 (a toll free number)

As always, please feel free to call your school nurses, Krystal Harms RN at 395-7063 or Renae Hay RN at 395-7024 for more information.