



NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Issues H1N1 Influenza Guidance for Child-Care and Early Childhood Programs

BISMARCK, N.D. – Because the new H1N1 influenza virus can cause severe illness and complications for young children, especially those younger than 2, the North Dakota Department of Health has issued guidance to help child-care providers and parents protect the children in their care.

“Getting children vaccinated against both the seasonal flu and H1N1 influenza is important for protecting not only the children themselves, but also others in the community” said Kirby Kruger, state epidemiologist with the North Dakota Department of Health. “That’s why we strongly encourage parents to get their children vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available. In addition, child-care providers should emphasize the importance of vaccination to parents.”

Influenza spreads very easily in a child-care environment, much as it does in schools or other places where people are in close proximity. Until vaccine becomes available, there are some simple but effective steps child-care providers and parents can take to help avoid the spread of influenza.

- Children who are ill with a fever and a cough or sore throat should stay at home until 24 hours after the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Ill children and staff members should be sent home.
- Keep ill children and staff who are waiting to go home separate from those who are not ill.
- Conduct daily health checks to make sure children and staff are well.
- Perform routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces.
 - Clean visibly soiled surfaces and objects immediately.

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To reduce the chance of catching influenza, the Department of Health encourages child-care staff to follow these steps and teach them to children:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizers frequently throughout the day:
 - After using the bathroom
 - Before eating
 - Before preparing food
 - After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- Use a tissue to blow noses and to cough and sneeze into.
- Dispose of the tissue in a garbage receptacle.

Parents of children younger than 5 who become ill with influenza should contact their child's doctor immediately. In addition, child-care staff who are pregnant or who have health conditions should contact their doctor if they become ill. Antiviral medications can help lessen the effects of influenza, but they are most effective if taken within two days of becoming ill.

The typical symptoms of both novel H1N1 influenza and seasonal influenza are:

- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny nose.
- Fever.
- Body aches.
- Headache.
- Fatigue.
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

For more information, contact Kirby Kruger, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4549. More information about H1N1 influenza is available at www.ndflu.com.

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