

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

April 29, 2009

Dear Boston Public Schools Parent/Guardian,

As you may have heard or read about, the first two cases of swine flu have been identified in Massachusetts, in the City of Lowell. Because the health and safety of our students and staff are our highest priority, we would like to provide you with the facts.

Humans do not normally get swine flu, although virus infections have been identified in several U.S. states. In addition, suspect cases of swine flu have been identified in several other countries, most prominently in Mexico.

We have no reports at this time of swine flu in the City of Boston or involving anyone associated with the Boston Public Schools. We are receiving regular updates from the Boston Public Health Commission, and we will keep our families and staff informed of any developments. Right now, the best thing to do is for you and your child to take basic precautionary measures to avoid the spread of swine flu or any other virus. This information comes from the Boston Public Health Commission:

Always remind children to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Have them throw the tissue away after they use it. If they do not have a tissue, remind them to sneeze into their upper sleeve.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. If water is not near, they can use an alcohol-based hand cleaner with adult supervision if needed. Be sure to teach your children to scrub their hands together with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- Remind them to not touch their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.

Symptoms of swine flu are similar to regular flu and include sudden fever, cough, muscle aches, headaches, chills, and general weakness. Some children have had vomiting, belly pain, and diarrhea. In most cases, symptoms start suddenly and are much more severe than the common cold. **If your child has any of these symptoms, please contact your primary care physician immediately.** Your child also should stay home from school so as not to infect any other children or staff.

More information can be found on the Boston Public Health Commission web site, www.bphc.org/swineflu, including messages in multiple languages. Please call the Mayor's Health Line at 617-534-5050 if you have any questions. We also advise you to ensure that your contact information on file in your child's school is up to date.

We will keep you updated as we learn more. Thank you for your support in ensuring the health and safety of Boston Public Schools students.

Sincerely,

Carol R. Johnson
Superintendent