



FIGHTING SWINE FLU!



What is the Swine Flu?

The Swine Flu, also termed the H1N1 Virus, is different than the seasonal flu. Here Flu.gov defines it as: 'Seasonal (or common) flu is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity, and a vaccine is available. H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. Other countries, including Mexico and Canada, have reported people sick with this new virus. This virus is spreading from person-to-person, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.'

At Bright Beginnings, we are committed to a healthy and safe environment for caring & educating children. In order to maintain this environment, we are following the suggested guidelines administered by the Center for Disease Control in the USA, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the Flu Pandemic AND the Ministry of Health and Education here in Bahrain.

- We are taking the following steps to help keep students and staff from getting sick with flu. Some of these steps should be followed ALL the time, and not only during a flu pandemic.
- Attending meetings with Ministry of Health and Education regarding minimizing the spread of the flu pandemic and implementing their guidelines.
- Informing all families of the guideline of not sending children into the Center if ANY FAMILY MEMBER is suffering from flu like symptoms.
- Requesting from families and staff to observe a 5 day "stay at home" period after returning from being abroad as to monitor family members and children before they are brought into school.
- Training staff and educating children, in English and Arabic, regarding the flu and using the resources provided to keep them alert to ways of prevention, signs to look for and steps to take.
- Educating and reminding staff and children about respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) by hanging up flyers, posters and stickers in the hallway and toilets. Also by giving lesson plans and role-play sessions to children about this etiquette.
- Providing easy access to tissues and running water and soap or hand cleaners.
- Remind staff and students to practice good hand hygiene hanging up flyers, posters and stickers in the hallway and toilets and provide the time and supplies for students and staff to wash their hands when needed.
- Remind children to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way

- Following our cleaning routine that includes sanitizing touched surfaces, toys, and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution.
- Following our strict health policy of sending sick students and staff home and advising staff and families that children will not be admitted to return to the Center until they have a doctor's consent note and have been fever and symptom free for 7 days, as recommended by CDC for childcare facilities. Since we are in an environment with many young children and pregnant mothers it is advisable to see a doctor if any signs appear.
- Advising families to isolate as much as possible the sick child even when he/she returns home to minimize the spread.
- Vigilant and routine cleaning of surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.
- Move students and staff who become sick at school to a separate room until they can be sent home
- Limiting the number of staff who take care of the sick person and have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks available to be worn by school nurses and other staff caring for sick people at school.
- Encourage sick students and staff at higher risk of complications from flu to get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. Taking antiviral medicines early might prevent severe complications from the flu, such as hospitalization or death.

What can families and teachers in school settings do to keep from getting sick and spreading flu?

Families and school staff can keep from getting sick with flu in four ways:

- Practicing good hand hygiene. Students and staff members should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Practicing respiratory etiquette. The main way that the flu spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, so it's important to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands.
- Keep surfaces in the home and school clean and disinfect them as you would normally as part of your cleaning routine.
- Staying home if you're sick. Keeping sick people at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.

What are the symptoms of Swine Flu?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. The high risk groups for novel H1N1 flu are not known at this time, but it's possible that they may be the same as for seasonal influenza. People at higher risk of serious complications from seasonal flu include people age 65 years and older, children younger than 5 years old, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who are immunosuppressed (e.g., taking immunosuppressive medications, infected with HIV).

What can a parent do to prepare for flu during the 2009-2010 school year?

- Plan for childcare at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed (for a minimum of 7 school days).
- Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Identify a separate room in the house for care of sick family members. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for anyone who gets sick.
- Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained while at home.
- Talk to your school about their flu pandemic or emergency plan.
- Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

Families must take personal responsibility for helping to slow the spread of the virus by practicing these steps to keep from getting sick with flu and protecting others from getting the flu.

What is the best way to practice good hand hygiene?

- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice) is the best way to keep your hands from spreading the virus.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners containing at least 60% alcohol are also effective.
- If soap and water or alcohol-based products are not available or not acceptable, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful for cleaning hands. However, they may not be as effective as alcohol-based sanitizers.

Can the virus live on surfaces, such as computer keyboards?

- Yes, flu viruses may be spread when a person touches droplets left by coughs and sneezes on hard surfaces (such as desks or door knobs) or objects (such as keyboards or pens) and then touches his or her mouth or nose. However, it is not necessary to disinfect these surfaces beyond routine cleaning.
- Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Some states and localities have laws about specific cleaning products used in schools. School officials should contact their state health department and department of environmental protection for additional guidance.

How long should a sick student or staff member be kept home?

In the current flu conditions, students and staff with symptoms of flu should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not feel feverish, without using fever-reducing drugs. If the flu conditions become more severe, CDC (Center for Disease Control- USA) recommends that a sick person stay home for 7 days. A person who is still sick after 7 days should stay home until 24 hours after the symptoms have gone away. In addition, this longer period should be used in healthcare settings and in any place where a high number of high-risk people may be exposed, such as childcare facilities for children less than 5 years of age.

Sick people should stay at home, except to go to the doctor's office, and should avoid contact with others. Keeping people with a fever at home may reduce the number of people who get infected. Because high temperatures are linked with higher amounts of virus, people with a fever may be more contagious.

Should family members of sick students stay home too?

If flu conditions are severe, children should also stay home for 7 days from the time someone in their home became sick. It is possible that family members could already be sick with flu and not be showing symptoms yet. The 7-day period provides enough time to know if anyone else is sick with flu. Parents should continue to monitor their health and the health of the sick child, as well as the health of their other children.

What additional steps should schools and families take to keep students and staff from getting sick in the event that the flu is more severe?

In addition to the steps that schools should be taking all the time, if flu conditions become more severe, schools and families should consider adding the following steps.

- Extend the time sick students or staff stay home to at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.
- Schools should allow high-risk students and staff to stay home. These students and staff should make this decision in consultation with their doctor.
- Schools should conduct active symptom screening of students and staff upon arrival at school. Any sick students or staff should be separated from others, offered a surgical mask, and sent home.
- If a household member is sick, parents should keep any school-aged children home for 5 days from the time the first person in the home became sick. Parents should monitor the health of their other children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.
- Schools should find ways to increase social distances (the space between people) at school if possible.

Information in the leaflet is taken from the CDC website and the www.flu.gov. Please feel free to contact our office on 1771 0405 or info@bb-daycare.com for information from the Ministry of Health and Education regarding combating swine flu in child care settings.