



Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

State of Maryland

Garrett County Health Department

"Working Together for a Healthier Tomorrow"



Rodney B. Glotfelty, RS, MPH Health Officer
1025 Memorial Drive
Oakland, Maryland 21550
Equal Opportunity Employer

Personal Health Department
Jennifer Lee-Steckman, Director
301-334-7777 or 301-895-3111
FAX 301-334-7771

To: Parents of Garrett County Students

Date: May 5, 2009

Re: H₁N₁ (Swine Influenza)

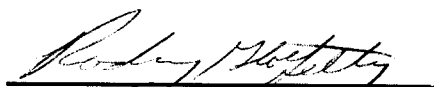
There has been much information flowing from the media into our homes since the first case of H₁N₁ was confirmed in the US. Much of this information presents a troubling picture to parents. The purpose of this information is to assist parents in educating themselves and their children about H₁N₁ in order to reduce some of the anxiety associated with all of the information related to this outbreak. Attached to this letter is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that may help parents and children better understand the reason so much attention has been placed on this new H₁N₁ influenza.

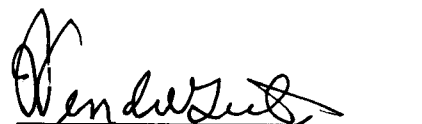
Before providing any information specific to the H₁N₁ illness we want to reassure all parents that there are currently NO cases probable or confirmed in Garrett County. There are currently 4 confirmed cases in Maryland. We are maintaining contact with local physicians and state and local officials to keep everyone updated as the situation changes. However, the information we have available now indicates the H₁N₁ influenza is no more severe than the seasonal flu.

As many parents are aware, schools around the state and country have closed due to the H₁N₁ influenza. School closures are a possibility in Garrett County if cases of H₁N₁ influenza are identified, but this decision will be made on a case-by-case basis. If schools are closed, parents may expect the closure to last for a period of time. Parents should consider childcare needs before a situation such as this occurs to reduce anxiety for both parents and children. The purpose of the school closures, if they happen, will be to slow the spread of the H₁N₁ illness. By delaying the spread of the disease for a few weeks or months parents may have additional options regarding medication treatment or a vaccine to prevent their children from becoming ill. This action can also help protect the entire community.

The Garrett County Health Department in cooperation with the Garrett County Board of Education and local healthcare providers are actively monitoring the developments of the H₁N₁. We encourage all parents with questions to contact their school, the health department (301-334-7697), or their healthcare providers to get answers regarding concerns or questions about the H₁N₁. Maryland has an H₁N₁ hotline available to residents Monday through Friday 9 AM to 9 PM and Saturday and Sunday 9 AM to 6 PM that you can call at 1-877-633-5848. Additional information can be found on the internet at www.garretthealth.org, www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/, and www.swineflu.maryland.gov.

Our goal is to keep everyone as informed as possible regarding the on-going flu outbreak, but the situation may change quickly.


Rodney Glotfelty, RS, MPH
Health Officer


Dr. Wendell Teets
Superintendent of Schools

May 4, 2009
Version 2

FAQs for Parents Regarding H₁N₁ (Swine Flu)

- **What is H₁N₁ (Swine Flu)?**
 - This is a new influenza virus for which people have no immunity
 - As a result the virus may cause a more severe and widespread illness than is typically seen with seasonal influenza, but so far this has not been the case
 - There is no vaccine available for this influenza
 - The virus is thought to spread the same as seasonal influenza from person to person by respiratory fluids from coughing and sneezing

- **What are the symptoms of H₁N₁ (Swine Flu)?**
 - The symptoms are similar to seasonal flu
 - Symptoms of the H₁N₁ may include:
 - Fever greater than 100° **and one or more of the following**
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny nose
 - Headache
 - Muscle aches
 - Extreme tiredness

- **What do I do if my child or I develop any of these symptoms?**
 - School nurses are actively watching students for symptoms of an influenza-like illness, and will contact you to take your child home from school if your child has a fever of 100° or greater and one of the influenza symptoms
 - Call your healthcare provider
 - Stay home from school and/or work until the fever is gone (approximately 7 days)
 - Get plenty of rest
 - Drink plenty of fluids
 - Fluids are water, broth, and sports drinks
 - Fluids are not soda
 - Use ibuprofen or acetaminophen to control the fever and body aches, if the person can take them.
 - Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers
 - Keep sick and well family members separate as much as possible to reduce the chances of spreading the illness

- **How can my family prevent the H₁N₁ (Swine Flu)?**
 - **HANDWASHING, HANDWASHING, HANDWASHING**
 - Liquid-based hand soap is better than bar soap
 - Use the hottest water the person can tolerate
 - Rub hands vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - Sing *Happy Birthday* twice or
 - Sing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*
 - Rinse hands from wrists to fingertips

- Respiratory etiquette
 - Cover mouth and nose with hand or the inside of the elbow when coughing and sneezing
 - Immediately wash hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing
- Use disposable tissues, not hankies
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is useful if soap and water is unavailable
- **When should I seek emergency medical care?**
 - Watch for the Warning Signs
 - Warning Signs are
 - H₁N₁ (Swine Flu) symptoms and any of the following
 - Chest Pain
 - Difficulty Breathing
 - Purple or Blue discoloration of face or lips
 - Signs of dehydration
 - Including—dizziness when standing, absence of urination, and no tears when crying with infants
 - Excessive vomiting and inability to keep fluids down
 - Seizures
 - Less responsive than normal or becomes unconscious
- **What do I tell my child about the H₁N₁?**
 - Find out what they already know
 - Children need to be aware of what is occurring at a level that they can understand
 - It is important that children are included in family discussion to help reduce their fear and anxiety regarding what is being said at home, at school, and on the television and radio
 - Explain to your children the basics
 - How to prevent the illness
 - What the symptoms are of the illness
 - Reduce their fears surrounding the illness
 - Tell them that there may be some changes that occur in the normal daily schedule
 - Explain this changes are to help to reduce the chances that someone in the family will become ill
 - If a family member or the child becomes ill, reassure the child that no one caused the illness, and that you will care for this person at home until he or she recovers
 - Be honest
 - Educate and inform yourself