

May 1, 2009

Dear Washington Parents,

As part of its ongoing crisis management planning, the Olathe School District formulated a pandemic response plan several years ago. Currently, we are working closely with the Johnson County Health Department and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to monitor the public health situation regarding the swine flu.

At this time, there have been *no reported cases of swine flu in our district*. However, we are taking every precaution to implement all recommended preventive measures.

### **What we are doing**

As is always the case, our school nurses are monitoring students for illness and sending them home if they have a fever. Nurses will follow up on any case of suspected swine flu and immediately report such cases to the health department. All school nurses are being updated regularly on the situation and the latest information and recommendations available from state and national health officials.

In addition, our custodial staff regularly cleans and disinfects the schools as part of their normal daily routine.

### **Kansas guidelines for closing schools**

In Kansas, the governor has the authority to close schools, if state health officials believe that is warranted. Earlier this week, the Centers for Disease Control recommended that a school be closed *if there is a confirmed case of swine flu at that school*. If no new cases occur at the school within a seven day period, the school would be reopened. That recommendation is based on the information available to health officials at this time. As more information becomes known about this strain of flu, the recommendation could be changed.

### **What you can do**

We ask that you and your family recognize the importance of:

- Washing one's hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers,
- Coughing into a tissue or your arm, rather than one's hand,
- Keeping your child home and calling the school if your child is ill, and
- Having a plan in place for your family in the event of a school closing for seven days.

We have enclosed additional information about the swine flu on the other side of this letter. Updates will be posted on our web site.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Christi Gottschalk

## INFORMATION FROM THE KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

- **This is a new virus, never before recognized in the United States or anywhere in the world.** The new virus contains genetic pieces from flu viruses that infect pigs, birds and humans. It appears able to spread among humans like the familiar human flu viruses that circulate in our communities every winter. Because this virus is new, we believe that no one has natural immunity against it. Immunization with the seasonal flu vaccine is not likely to offer protection.
- **Disease caused by the swine flu virus appears to be mild so far.** The ability of the virus to cause serious disease may change over time, or it may infect people who are less able to resist it effectively. There are reports of deaths associated with swine flu infections in Mexico. There has been only one death reported in the United States—that of a toddler in Texas, who had recently crossed the border from Mexico.
- **The disease is present in Kansas.** We are aware of two cases of swine flu in Kansas. One case followed a trip to Mexico. The other resulted from household contact with the returning traveler. State and local public health staff are currently working hard to identify additional cases and provide supporting laboratory work to characterize the extent of the outbreak in Kansas. NOTE: In the metro area, a probable case of swine flu has been reported in Platte County.
- **Swine flu is treatable.** While the new virus is resistant to certain anti-viral medications, at the moment it remains sensitive to others. To be maximally effective in shortening the length and severity of illness, these medications should be prescribed by a physician early in the course of infection. As always, resting at home and drinking ample fluids is essential for a complete recovery.
- **Swine flu is preventable.** While there is no vaccine that specifically protects against the new virus, everyday steps that prevent the spread of germs are very effective in reducing the risk of catching this disease. Those who develop flu symptoms must stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible for a period of seven days from the onset of illness.

The symptoms of swine flu in humans are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include:

- Fever greater than 100 degrees
- Body aches
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Respiratory congestion
- In some cases, diarrhea and vomiting

Updates regarding swine flu will be made available at the KDHE website (<http://www.swinefluks.org/>). Additionally, if you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our school nurse or Cindy Galemore, director of health services, 780-8231.