



ST. EDMUND'S ACADEMY

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

Dear Members of the St. Edmund's Academy Community:

The St. Edmund's Academy Administration is fully aware of the nationwide public health concern regarding the swine flu (H1N1 virus). At this time, there have not been any cases of swine flu reported in the Pittsburgh area according to city, county, and state health officials. An effective communication system is in place among area health and education organizations of which SEA is an active participant.

As you may have read in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and viewed on local TV channels, Allegheny County health leaders urge calm and caution on swine flu concerns. A similar message was delivered at a meeting I attended earlier this week, while at the same time ALL emphasize the importance of understanding the basics associated with this flu strain and what steps can be taken at home, in schools, and other public gathering places as "heightened" preventative measures. I am also very pleased with the response I have received from SEA parents in the health and medical fields who have expressed their readiness to assist us with reviewing our internal hygienic programs, and guiding us in further action as this situation unfolds. I am especially appreciative of this partnership as we are educators not health specialists.

We are receiving updates daily from a multitude of health and school organizations with suggestions on what to do within and what to communicate to members of our school community. There is consistency in the key points we should be communicating to our students' parents and our school employees at this time. They are in question form.

Is this swine flu virus contagious?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that this swine influenza A virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: **WASH YOUR HANDS**. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

YES. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possibly for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are every day actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast or troubled breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held or touched
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

The main message of this “Keeping In Touch” is that St. Edmund’s Academy is giving the highest level priority to the swine flu alert. Communication and preventative plans are in daily review and updated as reliable information is received from official health organizations with the primary purpose for the safety and well-being of all members of our school community.

Thank you for your partnership and as always I welcome your comments and suggestions on this or any other matter pertinent to the effectiveness of St. Edmund’s Academy operations.