



NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND
DIABILITY ASSISTANCE
David A. Hansell, Commissioner
David A. Paterson, Governor



NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Richard F. Daines, M.D., Commissioner
David A. Paterson, Governor

May 1, 2009

Dear Colleagues:

The H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak continues to grow in the United States and internationally, causing many in our communities to worry.

The best way to manage that anxiety is to share what we've learned so far from the New York State Department of Health, which has been providing regular updates since Governor David A. Paterson announced on Sunday that he had activated the State's health emergency preparedness plan and put the State on high alert to quickly identify and respond to any cases of H1N1 (swine flu).

We are still in the annual flu season, and seasonal flu is the predominant form of influenza, at present.

Flu symptoms, including symptoms for H1N1 flu, include: a fever over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, sore throat, and a runny or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms that may be experienced include muscle pain, fatigue, and, sometimes, vomiting or diarrhea.

If you have flu symptoms, stay home. Do not go to school, child care, or work and do not go anywhere where you could expose other people to flu germs, including mass transportation (buses and subways), the mall, or sporting events.

Knowing that we are still in the annual flu season, it is important to exercise basic precautions to protect yourself and others from infection. Please share this information with co-workers, family members, and clients you may encounter while at work.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Twenty seconds is ideal – it's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well as long as they contain at least 60 percent alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly in the trash. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.

- Keep your hands away from your face and avoid touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. This is how germs are spread.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of your elbow, not onto your hands.

To get the latest information on H1N1 (swine flu), call the State's 24-hour toll-free telephone hotline at 1-800-808-1987 or visit the New York State Department of Health website at www.nyhealth.gov or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu. New York City residents can call 311. The New York State Department of Health also offers educational materials on limiting the spread of influenza, available in English and Spanish, which can be ordered or downloaded directly from their website at: www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/pandemic/

Sincerely,



David A. Hansell
Commissioner
Office of Temporary and
Disability Assistance



Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner
Department of Health