

May 1, 2009

Dear Parents:

This letter will give you information about a new swine flu identified in the United States and how that might affect us at the Westminster Schools. We will be posting updates as we receive them on our website.

Every year, some people get sick with the “seasonal” flu during the fall and winter months. However, as you have likely heard, there is a new flu virus that is making people sick with the same symptoms of the seasonal flu: fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache and body aches (sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea).

It appears that this new flu can be spread from person to person. You may have heard, and have concerns, that this swine influenza virus has caused illness and death in some people in Mexico. As of April 27, 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting 40 confirmed cases within the US. It’s important for you to know that most people who got sick in the United States have very mild illness. This situation is evolving and we can expect that more cases will be identified.

At present, there are no reported cases of the new swine flu in Vermont. We want to do all we can to try to prevent transmission within Vermont and within the school.

Actions you can take —

- **If you or your child has recently returned from Mexico**, monitor for symptoms of influenza for seven days after return. If symptoms occur, call your healthcare provider for evaluation (be sure to mention your recent travel history).
- **If you or your child is sick, stay home from work or school until you are better.** Keep sick people away from people who are not sick.
- **Tell your school nurse** or administrator about your child’s symptoms so they can watch for other students with the same symptoms.
- **Wash your hands well and often.** Make sure your children do the same. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **If you can’t wash with soap and water**, use a hand sanitizer. (Gels, rubs or hand wipes, as long as they have at least 60% alcohol.
- **Remind children** to keep their hands away from their face and don’t touch mouth, nose or eyes.
- **Cover your cough.** Teach your children to do the same. Cough into the inside of your elbow, or into a tissue — not your hands!

- **Throw away used tissues** or hand sanitizer wipes. Teach your children to throw away tissues and then wash hands.
- **Don't share** water bottles, utensils, cups, etc. with others.
- **If people in your home are sick** with the flu and cannot see a healthcare provider, care for them at home — Give plenty of liquids (clear fluids with electrolytes). Use ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) for adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches. **DO NOT** give aspirin to children or teens. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, call a healthcare provider.

You can disinfect hard surfaces in your home within three feet of anyone who is ill. Use isopropyl alcohol or a solution made of one ounce bleach to one gallon of water.

For now, school will stay open — At this time, the Vermont Department of Health tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school, even students with history of travel if they don't have symptoms.

If the swine flu continues to spread in the U.S. and if it causes severe illness, closing of schools may be considered. The purpose of closing schools is to keep children at home and away from others — to slow the spread of flu from person-to-person.

If you have questions, call your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school information line 802-722-3241 You can also go to the school website: <http://wnesuwv.learningnetworks.com/Pages/index>.

It's important to keep informed about what's happening. You can get more information from:

- CDC website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu
- Vermont Department of Education at www.education.vermont.gov or
- Vermont Department of Health at www.healthvermont.gov
- The federal government keeps current information for individuals and families at www.pandemicflu.gov

Sincerely,

Steven Tullar, Principal

Jennifer Burke, RN, School Nurse