

Preparing for the Flu

(Including 2009 H1N1 Flu)

A Communication Toolkit for Institutions of Higher Education



Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Institutions of Higher Education

The purpose of “Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Institutions of Higher Education” is to provide information and communication resources to help students, faculty, and staff implement recommendations from CDC’s *Guidance for Responses to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009-2010 Academic Year*.

The toolkit includes:

- ▶ **Questions and Answers** about the CDC’s *Guidance for Responses to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009-2010 Academic Year*.
- ▶ **1 Fact Sheet for Institutions of Higher Education**
 - *Action Steps for Institutions of Higher Education to Prevent the Spread of Flu*
- ▶ **1 Fact Sheet for Students, Faculty, and Staff**
 - *Action Steps for Students, Faculty, and Staff to Prevent the Spread of Flu*
- ▶ **1 Poster for Institutions of Higher Education to Remind Sick People to Go Home**
 - *STOP! Do You Feel Sick?*
- ▶ **1 Template Letter (or E-mail) for Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents**
 - *Letter to Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents during Current Flu Conditions*
- ▶ **2 Template Announcements for Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents**
 - *If You are Sick with the Flu*
 - *Classes Remain in Session during Current Flu Conditions*
- ▶ **Text Messages for Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents**
- ▶ **Additional Communication Resources for Institutions of Higher Education**



Questions and Answers about CDC's *Guidance for Responses to Flu for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009–2010 Academic Year*

About the Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education

Q. How does CDC's new guidance differ from the previous guidance for institutions of higher education?

This new guidance applies to any flu virus circulating during the 2009–2010 academic year, not only 2009 H1N1 flu. It recognizes the need to balance risks of sickness among faculty, students, and staff with the benefits of keeping students in classes. It offers strategies and guidance for current flu conditions and for more severe flu conditions.

This guidance recommends that, based on current flu conditions, faculty, students, and staff with flu-like sickness should stay in their home, dormitory, or residence hall until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). This is a shorter time period than outlined in previous CDC guidance, which recommended that sick faculty, students, and staff remain at home 7 days after symptoms begin.

The recommendation to stay away from classes and from work for 7 days will be made only under more severe flu conditions. Under more severe conditions, a longer period will be recommended for healthcare settings and anywhere a high number of people at higher risk for complications from flu may be exposed.

Q. What are institutions of higher education?

For the purpose of this guidance, the term “institutions of higher education” refers to places of learning that include:

- ▶ universities and colleges,
- ▶ public and private institutions,
- ▶ residential and nonresidential institutions,
- ▶ degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions,
- ▶ educational or training programs that last from a few weeks to 4 or more years,
- ▶ student population sizes ranging from fewer than one hundred to tens of thousands,
- ▶ community colleges,
- ▶ vocational education and training programs, and
- ▶ students from across the country and around the world.



Q. Why should institutions of higher education be concerned about the flu?

Students, faculty, and staff can get sick with flu, and institutions may act as a “point of spread.” Students, faculty, and staff can easily spread flu to others in their institutions as well as in the larger community. To date, the highest number of cases of 2009 H1N1 flu have been confirmed among people 5–24 years old. They are also at risk of getting seasonal flu.

Q. How will CDC help institutions and communities decide what steps to take?

CDC and other public health agencies will be monitoring national data on the number of people seeking care for flu-like sickness as well as other outcomes and consequences of the flu. CDC will also look at the geographic spread of flu-like illness and changes in the virus. By comparing data with historical seasonal flu trends and trends during the H1N1 flu conditions in April through December 2009, CDC will be able to provide advice to state and local agencies on appropriate steps to take. The impact of flu in the fall and winter 2009 will likely vary from state to state and community to community. States, communities, and institutions should consider:

- ▶ who needs to be involved in the decision-making process, and include those people in regular communications,
- ▶ severity of the flu and its impact in the community, schools, and institutions of higher education,
- ▶ capacity of the healthcare system to respond to local outbreaks, and
- ▶ the goals, feasibility, and community’s acceptability of action steps being considered.

Q. What are the most effective methods to communicate with students, faculty, and staff about the flu?

- ▶ Consider all possible channels to reach these audiences. In addition to traditional media such as local news, radio, and newspapers, consider using the institution’s Web site as well as new media channels such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. For more information about social media tools visit: www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Campaigns/H1N1.
- ▶ Consider placing “on hold” messages on your institution’s telephone system and changing the information frequently. “On hold” messages are pre-recorded messages that play while someone is waiting for the phone to be answered.
- ▶ Determine if there is a need to translate any of the communication materials into other languages.
- ▶ Provide regular briefings for staff who interact with media, parents/guardians, the community, legislators, etc. Make sure staff have access to the most up-to-date information regarding the flu and the institution’s flu response plan, including suspension of any classes and the cancellation of any events.

Q. How should institutions communicate with parents of students attending the institution or participating in study abroad programs sponsored by the institution?

Develop specific information targeted to students' parents and provide it through communication channels that they use, such as the institution's Web site. Parents will be concerned about issues at institutions ranging from their child's safety and health to the possibility of classes being suspended. Consider creating a special section or page on the Web site for information specifically for parents.

Parents of students in a study abroad program will want to stay informed of situations affecting their child and the program. Encourage parents to advise their child to use good judgment and to take precautions against getting the flu in the country where they are studying and living, as well as in any countries to which they may travel.

Institutions should continuously assess the flu conditions in countries where they have students in study abroad programs. Review policies for study abroad programs, including how students can access health services abroad, how sickness will be reported to the institutions, resources for students abroad who are unable to travel back to the U.S., and any legal liability issues. Health information for travelers, including students studying abroad can be found at www.cdc.gov/travel.

Q. What other populations should institutions take into consideration when preparing for the flu season?

Institutions should review their policies and consider the special needs of certain student populations such as students studying abroad, high school students taking college classes, special education students, and health-care professional students.

Q. As a parent of a student who attends an institution, should I bring them home?

If possible, residential students with flu-like sickness whose families live relatively close to the campus should go home to self-isolate. They should return home in a way that limits contact with others as much as possible. For example, travel by private car or taxi would be preferable over use of public transportation. They should stay away from other people until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). If flu severity increases, students at higher risk for flu complications including students, faculty, and staff with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, or asthma, or who are pregnant may consider staying home while flu transmission is high in their institution community. Currently, CDC is not recommending removing healthy students from their institutions.

Q. Should my child who is a student at an institution get antiviral medicine if they get sick?

Parents should make sure their child knows if he or she is at higher risk for flu complications. People at higher risk for flu complications including students, faculty, and staff with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes) who become sick with flu-like sickness should call their health care provider as soon as possible to determine if they need antiviral treatment. It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with flu and have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications. Other people may also be treated with antiviral drugs this season. Early treatment with antiviral medicines often can prevent more severe consequences. Parents should encourage sick students who are at higher risk for flu complications to seek early treatment. Antiviral medicines are not given to all people during flu season because most people get better on their own, over-use can promote antiviral-resistant viruses, and administration of antiviral medicines can cause adverse reactions in some people.

Steps for Institutions of Higher Education to Help Keep Students, Faculty, and Staff Healthy during Current Flu Conditions

Q. What steps can institutions take to keep students, faculty, and staff healthy?

- ▶ Encourage any students, faculty, and staff who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu. Also encourage students, faculty, and staff who are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu to receive the H1N1 flu vaccine. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about primary target groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
- ▶ Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette through direct education, communication materials such as posters and flyers, and other methods including e-mail, text messaging, or phone calls.
- ▶ Establish a method for maintaining contact with students who are sick. If resources permit, student affairs staff, housing staff, or health care providers could be assigned to make daily contact with each student.
- ▶ Encourage sick people to stay at home or in their residence except to talk with a health care provider about whether they have flu, appropriate treatment, and what actions to take if they have severe symptoms.
- ▶ Separate people who are sick from those who are well as soon as possible.
- ▶ Encourage students, faculty, and staff living off campus to stay at home if they are sick with flu-like sickness. They should stay home until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours.

- ▶ Discourage visitors with flu-like sickness from attending institution-sponsored events until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours.
- ▶ Examine and revise, as necessary, current flu (or crisis) response plans and procedures, and update contact information.
- ▶ Communicate with vendors who supply critical products and services, including hygiene supplies, food service, and personal protective equipment for staff, to address the continuation of these products and services throughout the flu season.

Q. What steps can students, faculty, and staff take to stay healthy and keep from spreading the flu?

Here are four important ways faculty, students, and staff can stay healthy and keep from getting sick with flu or spreading the flu. They can:

- ▶ Talk to their health care providers about whether they should be vaccinated. Students, faculty, and staff who want protection from the flu can be encouraged to get vaccinated for seasonal flu. Also students, faculty, and staff who are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, should consider getting the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about primary target groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
- ▶ Practice respiratory etiquette. The main way flu spreads is from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, so it's important that people cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their elbow or shoulder, not their hands.
- ▶ Practice good hand hygiene. They should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also useful.
- ▶ Stay home if they are sick. Stay home or in their place of residence for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever.

Students, faculty, and staff should take personal responsibility to help slow the spread of the flu virus. By practicing these steps, they can keep from getting sick from flu and help protect others from getting the flu.

Q. Who should receive a flu vaccination?

Vaccines will be available this year to protect against seasonal flu. Children 6 months through 18 years of age, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes), and everyone age 50 and older should be vaccinated against seasonal flu as early as possible.

The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is now available and recommended for everyone. Also certain groups at higher risk for complications from this flu are encouraged to get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. These groups include:

- ▶ pregnant women,
- ▶ people who live with and care for children younger than 6 months of age,
- ▶ healthcare and emergency medical services personnel,
- ▶ people between the ages of 6 months and 24 years (this includes most students attending institutions of higher education), and
- ▶ people ages 25–64 years of age who have chronic health conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes) or compromised immune systems.

Q. Should institutions provide vaccinations for seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu?

Institutions should consider working with their local public health partners to have on-site vaccination clinics for seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu. Information about 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination can be found at: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination. Information about seasonal flu vaccine can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm.

Q. What are some ways institutions can encourage good respiratory etiquette?

The main way flu spreads is from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes. Institutions can encourage good respiratory etiquette through:

- ▶ direct education and by posting and disseminating communications materials such as flyers and posters, and
- ▶ making sure tissues and no-touch wastebaskets are readily available.

Q. What are some ways institutions can encourage good hand hygiene?

- ▶ Make soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand rubs readily available.
- ▶ Educate all students, faculty, and staff about good hand hygiene through direct education and communication materials such as posters and flyers.

Q. What does CDC recommend regarding routine cleaning of institutions?

- ▶ Establish regular schedules for frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, including:
 - doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons,
 - desks, tables, chairs, sofas, and
 - counters and surfaces in cafeterias, meeting rooms, and offices.
- ▶ Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down prior to each use. These surfaces include:
 - chairs, study carrels,
 - remote controls,
 - keyboards,
 - headphones shared in language laboratories, and
 - telephone receivers and touchtone pads in common areas.
- ▶ Encourage students to frequently clean their living quarters. Students living together should regularly clean frequently used surfaces.
- ▶ Routinely clean surfaces and items that people frequently touch with their hands with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

People at Higher Risk for Complications

Q. Which students, faculty, and staff are at higher risk for complications from flu?

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people) and anyone can have serious problems from the flu. Students, faculty, and staff should be encouraged to talk with their health care provider to determine if they are at higher risk for flu complications, especially if they have been in close contact with others who are sick with flu or flu-like sickness.

Some groups are at higher risk for complications from the flu. People at higher risk for flu complications include children younger than 5 years (especially children younger than 2 years old), pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information on people at higher risk for flu complications, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/highrisk.htm>.

Q. What actions should pregnant students, faculty, or staff take to protect themselves from the flu?

Pregnant women should follow the same guidance as the general public related to staying home when sick, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and routine cleaning.

Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from flu and, like all people at higher risk, should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible if they develop flu-like symptoms. Early treatment with antiviral flu medicines is recommended for pregnant women who have the flu; these medicines are most effective when started within the first 48 hours of feeling sick.

Pregnant women should know that they are part of the primary target group to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. Seasonal flu vaccine is also recommended for pregnant women and can be given at any time during pregnancy.

Symptoms

Q. What are the symptoms of seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu?

Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including the 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Q. How do I recognize a fever or signs of a fever?

A fever is a temperature that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius when taken with a thermometer. Look for these possible signs of fever: if he or she feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Q. How do I know if someone has 2009 H1N1 flu or seasonal flu?

It will be very hard to tell if someone who is sick has 2009 H1N1 flu or seasonal flu. Public health officials and medical authorities will not be recommending laboratory tests. Anyone who has the symptoms of flu-like sickness should stay home and not go to work.

Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including the 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Q. What fever-reducing medicines can students, faculty, and staff take when sick?

Fever-reducing medicines are medicines that contain acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Motrin). These medicines can be given to people who are sick with flu to help bring their fever down and relieve their pain. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) should not be given to anyone younger than 18 years of age who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious sickness called Reye's syndrome.

Steps for Institutions of Higher Education to Prevent the Spread of Flu under Current Flu Conditions

Q. What steps can institutions take to keep sick students, faculty, and staff from spreading flu?

There are several steps that institutions can take during current flu conditions:

- ▶ Encourage sick students, faculty, and staff to stay home and away from other people until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- ▶ If possible, sick students, faculty, and staff members who live in campus-sponsored housing should return to their family's home.
- ▶ Ask sick students with private rooms to remain in their own rooms and receive care and meals from one person, if possible.
- ▶ Consider providing temporary, alternate housing for sick people who cannot leave campus where they can stay until 24 hours after they are free of fever.
- ▶ Establish a method for maintaining contact with students who are sick. If resources permit, student affairs staff, housing staff or health care providers could be assigned to make daily contact with each student.
- ▶ Communicate and instruct students to promptly seek medical attention if they have a medical condition that places them at higher risk of flu-related complications, are concerned about their sickness, or develop severe symptoms. Severe symptoms include increased fever, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, fast breathing, bluish skin color, vomiting, dizziness or confusion.

Q. What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation is when sick people stay home and away from other people until they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). During the period of self-isolation, sick people should limit contact with others and try to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from people. If close contact cannot be avoided, sick people should wear a surgical mask when they are around other people, if they can tolerate it.

During current flu conditions, people who are sick should stay home and away from other people until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. If flu conditions become more severe, those who are sick should stay at their home, dormitory, or residence hall for at least 7 days, even if symptoms go away sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.

Q. What can institutions do to encourage students, faculty, and staff to stay in their homes, dormitories, or residence halls when they're sick?

For faculty and staff, consider adjusting sick leave policies to ensure they do not return to work or class while sick. For students, consider similarly altering policies to ensure that there are no academic consequences for staying home while sick (i.e., no punishment for missed classes and examinations, turning in assignments late, etc.). Institutions also should consider providing distance-based learning options, such as Web courses.

Q. What should students or faculty members living on campus do if they get the flu?

CDC recommends that people with flu-like sickness remain at home and away from other people until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).

For those who cannot leave campus and return to their family's home, if they live in a private room they should remain in their room and receive care from one person. Institutions may consider providing temporary, alternate housing where sick people can stay until 24 hours after they are free of fever.

Q. What steps should I take if my roommate is sick with the flu?

- ▶ You should limit your contact with your sick room and try to maintain a distance of 6 feet from him or her.
- ▶ If close contact cannot be avoided, your sick roommate should wear a surgical mask, if tolerable, when he or she is around you and other people.
- ▶ You should frequently clean commonly-touched surfaces.

Q. How long should a student, faculty member, or staff member with the flu stay at home or in their residence?

Under current flu conditions, faculty, students, and staff with flu-like symptoms should stay home for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). The sick person may decide to stop taking fever-reducing medicines as he or she begins to feel better. This person should continue to monitor his or her temperature until it has been normal for 24 hours.

If flu conditions become more severe, the sick person should stay home or in their residence for 7 days. A person who is still sick after 7 days should stay home until 24 hours after the symptoms have gone away. In addition, this longer period should be used in healthcare settings and may be considered anywhere a high number of people at higher risk for complications from flu may be exposed, such as child care facilities.

Sick people should stay at home or in their residence, except to go to the health care provider's office, and they should avoid contact with others. Keeping people with a fever at home may reduce the number of people who get infected with the flu virus. Because high body temperatures are linked with higher amounts of virus, people with a fever may be more contagious.

Note that when flu is widespread in an area, institutions should not require a health care provider's note for sick students to validate their flu-like sickness or to return to work, as medical facilities may be extremely busy during this time.

Steps for Institutions of Higher Education under Severe Flu Conditions

Q. How will institutions of higher education know if the flu is more severe and they should consider taking additional action steps?

CDC and its partners will continue to monitor the spread of flu, the severity of the sickness it's causing, and whether the virus is changing. State and local health departments will also be on the lookout for increases in severe sickness in their areas and will provide guidance to their communities. Institutions should work closely with state and local public health officials to guide their flu response. Public health agencies will communicate changes in severity and the extent of flu-like sickness to ensure that institutions have the information they need to choose the right steps to reduce the impact of flu.

Q. What additional steps should institutions take to keep students, faculty, and staff from getting sick in the event that the flu becomes more severe?

If flu conditions become more severe, CDC may recommend the following additional strategies and actions for institutions of higher education.

- ▶ Permit students, faculty, and staff at higher risk of complications from flu to stay home while there is a lot of flu in the community.
- ▶ Explore innovative methods to increase social distances between students while continuing to meet their educational needs. A few examples of increasing social distances include moving desks farther apart, leaving empty seats between students, holding outdoor classes, and using distance learning methods.
- ▶ Encourage students, faculty, and staff who are sick to stay at their home, dormitory, or residence hall for at least 7 days, even if symptoms go away sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.
- ▶ Cancel, postpone, or discourage all institution-related and non-institution-related mass gatherings. These include sporting events, performances, commencement ceremonies, fraternity and sorority parties, and other events that bring large groups of people into close contact with one another.
- ▶ Suspend classes. Some institutions may choose to suspend classes when they cannot maintain normal functioning. And, CDC may recommend suspending classes if the flu starts causing severe disease in a lot of people. Institution administrators should work closely with their local and state public health officials when deciding whether or not to suspend classes. The length of time classes should be suspended depends on the goal of suspending classes and the severity of existing sickness. If the decision is made to suspend classes, CDC recommends doing so for at least 5–7 calendar days.

Q. What can institutions do to increase social distance during a more severe flu outbreak?

Institution officials should think creatively about ways to increase the space between people, while keeping students in class. Not every method will be feasible for all institutions. However, it is important to consider options for social distancing if classes remain open.

Options include:

- ▶ holding classes outdoors,
- ▶ distance-learning methods,
- ▶ leaving vacant seats between students,
- ▶ moving desks farther apart, and
- ▶ moving classes to larger spaces to allow more space between students.

Class Suspension

Q. What does suspending classes mean during a flu outbreak?

When classes are suspended at institutions, they are temporarily discontinued to slow or decrease the spread of flu. Institutions may choose to keep offices open for faculty and staff; however, students are directed to stay at home or in their residence.

Q. What are the different types of class suspension?

There are two types of class suspension:

- ▶ **Reactive class suspension** is used when a majority of students and staff are sick and are not attending classes, or the institution cannot maintain normal operations.
- ▶ **Preemptive class suspension** is used early on during a community flu response to decrease the spread of the flu before many students, faculty, and staff get sick. This is based on information about the spread of **severe flu** in the region. Class suspension is likely to be more effective when used early after flu appears.

If classes are suspended preemptively, all institution-related large gatherings should be canceled or postponed. This includes events such as lectures, films, concerts, sporting events, worship services, commencement, or other events that bring large groups of people into close contact with one another.

Q. What should international students do if classes are suspended at a U.S. institution of higher education they are attending?

International students should follow all flu recommendations their institutions make for students. During severe flu conditions if classes are suspended, international students and others who do not have easy access to alternative housing should stay on campus. Students should try to limit contact with other people. Institutions should plan to continue education through distance-based learning methods for students who remain on campus as well as those who leave to go home.

Q. Are there different recommendations for residential and non-residential students when an institution of higher education suspends classes?

Institutions with residential students should plan for ways to continue essential services such as meals, custodial services, security, and other basic operations. When possible, dismiss students, faculty, and staff who can drive home or who can go to the nearby home of a relative, close friend of the family, or an international student's host family. Students who stay on campus should increase the distance between people and minimize crowding.

Institutions with only non-residential students, such as commuter schools, should consider allowing faculty and staff to continue using facilities while classes are not being held. Keeping facilities open may allow faculty to develop lessons and materials, to advise students through distance-based learning methods such as by telephone calls and e-mail, and to engage in other essential activities, such as research projects.

**Fact Sheet for
Institutions of
Higher Education**

Action Steps for Institutions of Higher Education to Prevent the Spread of Flu

Take the following steps to help keep students, faculty, and staff from getting sick with flu.

During current flu conditions:

- ▶ **Encourage students, faculty, and staff to get vaccinated against seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.** Institutions should also consider offering opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to get vaccinated on campus for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.
- ▶ **Encourage students and staff to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue** when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand rubs. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow or shoulder instead of their hands when a tissue is not available.
- ▶ **Advise sick students, faculty, and staff to stay at home** or in their residence until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- ▶ **Establish a method for maintaining contact with students who are sick.** If resources permit, student affairs staff, housing staff or health care providers could be assigned to make daily contact with each student.
- ▶ **Encourage students and staff at higher risk of complications from flu to check with their health care provider** about their options. People at higher risk of flu complications who get sick will benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines. It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with flu and have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications. Other people may also be treated with antiviral drugs by their doctor this season.
- ▶ **Discourage sick members of the public and sick visitors from attending institution-sponsored events** until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours.
- ▶ **Establish regular schedules for frequent cleaning of surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or counters, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Promote frequent cleaning of bathrooms and ensure adequate supplies of soap and paper towels.
- ▶ **Provide disposable wipes** so that commonly used surfaces such as chairs, remote controls, and keyboards shared by students can be wiped down prior to each use.
- ▶ **Encourage students to frequently clean their living quarters.** Students living together should frequently clean commonly-used surfaces such as doorknobs, refrigerator handles, remote controls, and countertops.



If the flu conditions are MORE severe, institutions should consider adding the following steps:

- ▶ **Allow students, faculty, and staff at higher risk for complications to stay home.** These students, faculty, and staff should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider. Try to come up with ways for work or study to continue from home.
- ▶ **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) in classrooms such as moving desks farther apart, leaving empty seats between students, holding outdoor classes, and using distance learning methods.
- ▶ **Extend the time sick students, faculty, or staff stay home or in their residence** to at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. Those who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.
- ▶ **Consider how and when to suspend classes** by working closely with your local and state public health officials. The length of time classes should be suspended depends on your goal for suspending classes and the severity and extent of illness.



Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 academic year:

- ▶ Review and revise current flu (or emergency) response plans and procedures, including plans protect to higher risk students, faculty, and staff.
- ▶ Collaborate with the local health department, community organizations, local businesses, and social services on a plan for flu response.
- ▶ Communicate with vendors who supply critical products and services, to ensure this will continue when flu conditions are more severe.
- ▶ Update student, faculty, and staff contact information as well as emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Identify and establish points of contact with the local public health and education agencies.
- ▶ Develop a plan to cover key staff positions at your institution's health clinics.
- ▶ Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette through direct education, communication materials such as posters and flyers, and other methods including e-mail, text messaging, or phone calls.
- ▶ Develop communication materials (e.g., letters to parents, Web site postings) that can be used to inform students, faculty, staff, and parents about your institution's flu response. Check out *Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Institutions for Higher Education* for basic information and communication resources such as letters and announcements. The toolkit is available at [School Planning](#).
- ▶ Consider adjusting sick leave policies so sick faculty and staff can stay home. Review policies for students to ensure that there are no negative academic consequences for staying home while sick.
- ▶ Develop a plan and options for how work can be continued at home (e.g., homework packets, Web-based lessons, phone calls), if institutions suspend classes.
- ▶ Help students, faculty, and staff understand the important roles they can play in reducing the spread of flu.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov



**Fact Sheet for
Students,
Faculty, and Staff**

Action Steps for Students, Faculty, and Staff to Prevent the Spread of Flu

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you may keep from getting sick with the flu:

- 1. Talk to your health care provider** about getting vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu. Information about 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination can be found at: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination. Information about seasonal flu vaccine can be found at: www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm.
- 2. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
- 3. Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also useful.

Stay home or at your place of residence if you are sick for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Staying away from others while sick can prevent others from getting sick too. Ask a roommate, friend, or family member to check up on you and to bring you food and supplies if needed.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, students, faculty, and staff should consider the following steps:

- ▶ **Extend the time you stay home or at your residence** to at least 7 days, even if you feel better sooner. If you are still sick after 7 days, continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after your symptoms have completely gone away. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.
- ▶ **Prepare for the possibility suspension of classes** by planning to continue your work at home (e.g., homework packets, Web-based lessons, phone calls), and find a place where you can stay either by going to your home, home of a relative, or close friend of the family.



Follow these steps now to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 flu season:

- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Cover coughs or sneezes using your elbow or shoulder instead of your hands when a tissue is not available.
- ▶ Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also useful.
- ▶ Frequently clean your living quarters. If you live together with other students, you should frequently clean commonly-used surfaces such as doorknobs, refrigerator handles, remote controls, computer keyboards, countertops, faucet handles, and bathroom areas.
- ▶ Plan to monitor your health by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Talk with your health care provider if you are at higher risk for complications from flu.
- ▶ Update emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Learn more about your institution's pandemic response plan.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Stop! Do You Feel Sick?
Poster

Do you feel sick?



**You may have the flu if you have fever or chills
AND
a cough or sore throat**

**You may also have a runny nose, body aches,
a headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting**

**If you think you have the flu,
stay home or in your residence,
except to get medical care.**

**For more information visit www.flu.gov
or call 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)**



**Template Letter (or E-mail)
for Students, Faculty,
Staff, and Parents**

Template Letter (or E-mail) to Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents during Current Flu Conditions

- ▶ *Coordinate efforts with your local health department before distributing this letter or e-mail to ensure that all information is timely, relevant, and accurate.*
- ▶ *Advise students, faculty, staff, and parents on where to obtain specific information about your institution's flu response.*
- ▶ *Visit [School Planning](#) to download a Microsoft Word version letter of this letter or e-mail that you can modify with additional flu information for these important audiences.*

Dear students, faculty, staff and parents,

As you may know, flu can be spread easily from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu at *[name of institution]* for as long as possible, **but, we need your help to accomplish this.**

We are working closely with the *[County/State]* health department to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our institution. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available to us.

For now, we are doing everything we can to keep our institution operating as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help:

- ▶ ***Talk with your health care providers about getting vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.*** If you are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, you should consider getting the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. People at higher risk for flu complications include children younger than 5 years (especially children younger than 2 years old), pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information on people at higher risk for flu complications, visit [People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications](#)
- ▶ ***Practice respiratory etiquette*** by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- ▶ ***Practice good hand hygiene*** by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand rubs also are useful.
- ▶ ***Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.*** A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius. Look for possible signs of fever: if the person feel very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering. Symptoms of flu can also include cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.
- ▶ ***Stay home if you have flu or flu-like illness for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever*** (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Don't go to class or work.

If this year's flu season becomes more severe, we may take the following additional steps to prevent the spread of the virus:

- ▶ **Allow students, faculty, and staff at higher risk for complications to stay home.** These students, faculty, and staff should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider.
- ▶ **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) in classrooms such as moving desks farther apart, leaving empty seats between students, holding outdoor classes, and using distance learning methods.
- ▶ **Extend the time sick students, faculty, or staff stay home or in their residence.** During severe flu conditions sick people should stay home for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. Those who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.
- ▶ **Suspend classes.** This decision will be made together with local and state public health officials. The length of time classes should be suspended will depend on the goal of suspending classes as well as the severity and extent of illness.

For more information about flu in our community and what our institution is doing, visit *[institution's Website]* or call *[appropriate phone number]*.

[If your institution has a study abroad program, include information on where students and parents can go to get more information about flu response while abroad. Include your institution Web site and also [Travelers' Health](#) for health information for students studying abroad.]

For the most up-to-date information on flu, visit. Flu.gov , or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).

We will notify you by *[e-mail, institution's Web site, text message, Facebook, Twitter, campus information center, etc.]* of any additional changes to our institution's strategy to prevent the spread of flu on our campus.

Sincerely,

[Institution administrator's name and signature]

**Template Announcements
for Students, Faculty,
Staff, and Parents**

Template 1: If You are Sick with the Flu

- ▶ *This template can be customized and used as an announcement via e-mail, Web site, institution newsletter or newspaper, or other creative ways to reach students, faculty, staff, and parents.*
 - *Primary Audience: Students, Faculty, and Staff*
 - *Secondary Audience: Parents of Students and the Community*
- ▶ *Coordinate efforts with your local health department before distributing this letter or e-mail communication to ensure that all information is timely, relevant, and accurate.*
- ▶ *Visit www.flu.gov/plan/school/higheredtoolkit.html to download and customize a Microsoft Word version of this letter and to view more flu information to share with students, faculty, staff, and parents.*

If you are sick with the flu, below are some tips on how to take care of yourself and to keep others healthy.

- **Know the signs and symptoms of flu.** Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including the 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.
- **Contact your health care provider or institution's health services if you are at higher risk for complications from flu for treatment.** People at higher risk for flu complications include children younger than 5 years (especially children younger than 2 years old), pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information on people at higher risk for flu complications, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/highrisk.htm>.
- **Stay home or at your place of residence if you are sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Staying away from others while sick can prevent others from getting sick too. Ask a roommate or friend to check up on you and to bring you food and supplies if needed.

- *[Insert information here if your institution has a plan for temporary or alternate housing for sick students who cannot leave campus and do not have a private room.]*
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also useful if soap and water are not available.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- **Sick people should stay at home or in their residence**, except to go to the health care provider's office.
- **Stay in a separate room and avoid contact with others.** If someone is caring for you, wear a mask, if available and tolerable, when they are in the room.
- **Drink plenty of clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, and electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from becoming dehydrated.
- **Contact a healthcare provider** *[or go to the health services clinic]* **right away** if you are having difficulty breathing or are getting worse.

For specific information on how to take care of someone who is sick, visit:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

For more information about flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.flu.gov.

Template 2: Classes Remain in Session during Current Flu Conditions

- ▶ *This template can be customized and used as an announcement via e-mail, Web site, institution newsletter or newspaper, or other creative ways to reach students, faculty, staff, and parents.*
 - *Primary Audience: Students, Faculty, and Staff*
 - *Secondary Audience: Parents of Students and the Community*
- ▶ *Coordinate efforts with your local health department before distributing this letter or e-mail communication to ensure that all information is timely, relevant, and accurate.*
- ▶ *Visit [School Planning](#) to download and customize a Microsoft Word version of this letter and to view more flu information to share with students, faculty, staff, and parents.*

The flu season will last through the fall and winter. More than one kind of flu virus will be spreading this season, including seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu. We encourage all students, faculty, and staff to follow these recommendations to stay healthy.

- **Talk with your health care providers about getting vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.** If you are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, you should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit [2009 H1N1 Vaccination Recommendations](#).
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
- **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also useful.

At this time, students, faculty, and staff who are NOT sick can safely come to class and to work. We are working closely with the *[County/ State]* health department and will keep you updated with any important information regarding the current flu conditions.

We will continue to monitor flu conditions as they develop and will keep you informed of any changes.

For updates, call the *[insert name of institution]* information center at *[INSERT NUMBER]*, visit our Web site at *[INSERT WEB SITE ADDRESS]* or follow us on Twitter at *[INSERT WEB ADDRESS]*. For more information about flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.flu.gov.

**Text Messages for
Students, Faculty,
Staff, and Parents**

Text Messages for Institutions of Higher Education to Send to Students, Faculty, and Staff

The following messages can be sent from institutions of higher education to students, faculty, and staff through cell phone text messaging, Twitter, Facebook, and other social network channels.

Status of Classes Classes continuing in session. Call campus information center at /XXX-XXXX/ or visit our Web site for more info.

.....
Classes suspended due to flu. Call campus information center at /XXX-XXXX/ or visit our Web site for more info.

.....
Classes resuming on [INSERT DATE / TIME]. Call campus information center at /XXX-XXXX/ or visit our Web site for more info.

Prevention Wash hands often or use alcohol-based hand rub. Wipe commonly touched surfaces such as doorknobs, keyboards, telephone, etc.

If You Are Sick If you're sick with fever, chills, a cough or sore throat - don't come to class.

.....
If you're sick, stay home for 24 hrs after your fever has gone away.

Symptoms You may have the flu if you have fever, chills, a cough or sore throat.

.....
What to Do If You Get Flu-Like Symptoms <http://bit.ly/hvsaS>

More Flu Information Get important 2009 H1N1 flu info from the mobile CDC Website at <http://m.cdc.gov> [If sent through Twitter add "ReTweet this!"]

.....
2009 H1N1 Flu and You. Q&A from CDC
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm



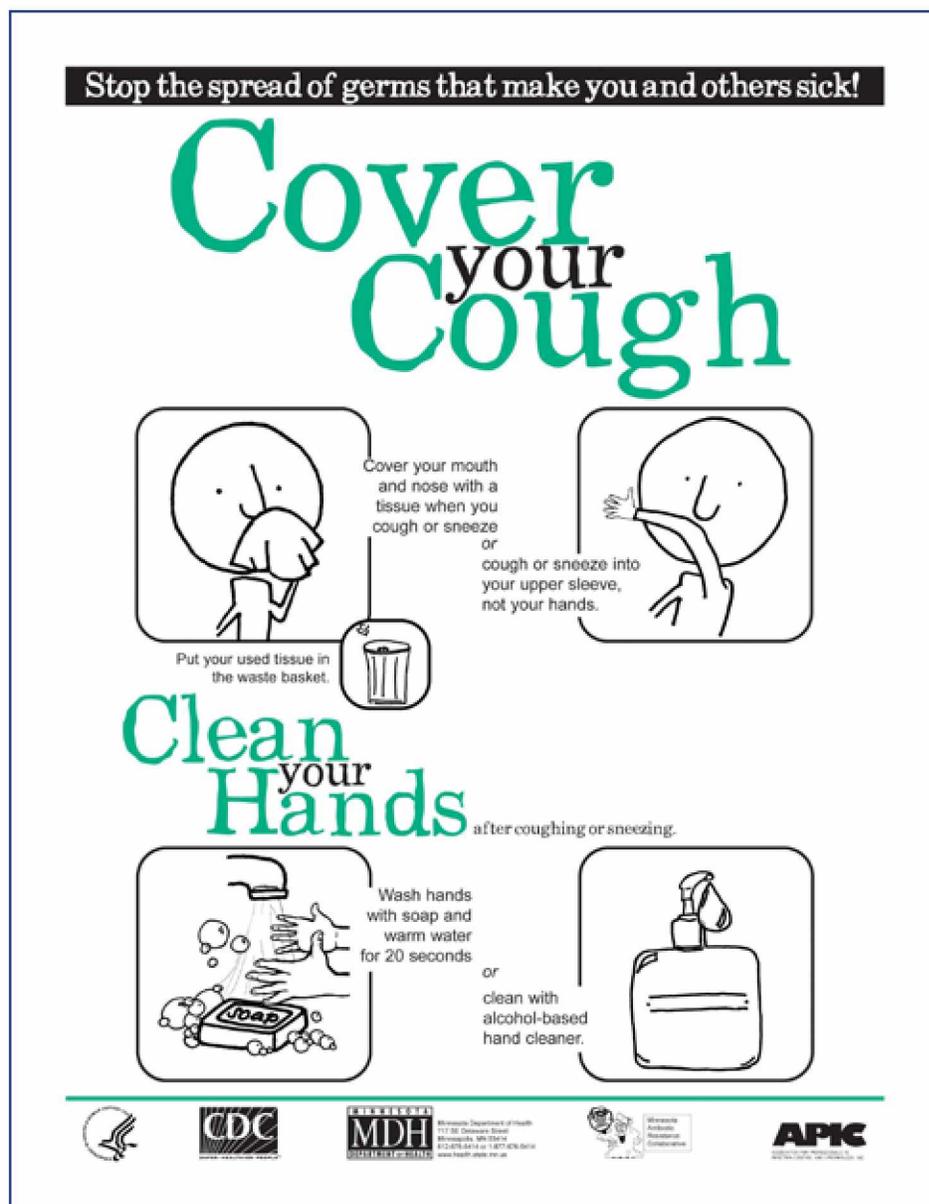
**Additional
Communication
Resources**

Additional Communication Resources for Institutions of Higher Education to Share with Students, Faculty and Staff

CDC Posters about Flu Prevention for Institutions

Use the following posters and fact sheets in your classrooms, hallways, and around campus to educate students, faculty, and staff about ways to prevent the spread of flu.

www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials.htm (available in different sizes and languages)



Other Posters about Flu Prevention for Institutions

www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/materials (includes other posters, brochures, buttons, stickers, and other materials)



CDC Fact Sheets and Other Materials about Flu Prevention for Students, Faculty, and Staff

Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School

www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm (available in English and other languages)

2009 H1N1 Flu: Flyers & Other Print Materials

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/flyers.htm (includes brochures, flyers, fact sheets, and other materials about 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu)

Widgets

A widget is an application that displays the featured content directly on your Web page. Once you've added the widget to your Web site, there's no maintenance. When CDC.gov updates content, your site will be updated automatically. You will have up-to-date, credible health information on your Web page.

You can easily add a CDC widget to your Web page. Use CDC widgets to keep your students, faculty, and staff informed about flu. When they click on the widget, your Web page displays the featured, up-to-date content.

CDC's flu widgets are available at www.cdc.gov/widgets. For more CDC social media tools, go to: www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/h1n1.

Flu.gov widgets are available at www.hhs.gov/web/library/hhsfluwidgets.html. For more Flu.gov social media tools, go to www.flu.gov/news/socialmedia.

Sample Widgets



