

Talking to Children About Novel H1N1 Flu Concerns

Stressful situations often cause children to worry and have many questions about what is happening and how it can be fixed. It is important to remember to take care of your health and well-being as well as the health of your children. Your confidence, calm attitude and ability to cope well with stressful situations will help your children ease their worries and feel safe and secure.

Here are some helpful tips on what you can do for your children:

- ◆ Keep activities as consistent and normal as possible even if your normal routine changes (such as daycare or school closures).
- ◆ Ask your children what they have heard about novel H1N1 flu (swine flu). Answer questions openly and honestly at a level they can understand. Be concrete and do not avoid difficult questions.
- ◆ Allow your children to express their feelings and concerns. Let them know it is okay to be afraid or mad. Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
- ◆ Children always need to feel safe and loved. When they are uncertain about situations and afraid, they may need even more affection and attention.
- ◆ Limit exposure to media and adult conversations about novel H1N1 flu. Try to be available to watch the television with your children and answer their questions.
- ◆ Encourage appropriate healthy behaviors, such as eating well, sleeping well, and playing outside.
- ◆ Use their questions as an opportunity to let them know what they can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu.

Focus on what your child *can do* to avoid close contact with people who are sick with flu:

- ◆ Set a good example by **washing your hands frequently** with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice), and by **coughing and sneezing into a tissue** and disposing of it immediately.
- ◆ Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick with flu.
- ◆ Stay home from school and avoid extracurricular activities if sick.
- ◆ In communities where H1N1 (swine flu) virus is spreading, stay away from large gathering places or crowded settings if you are at high risk for complications of flu.

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Additional Resources

Key facts about Novel H1N1: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/key_facts.htm

Taking Care of Patients at Home: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

Talking to Children About Swine Flu (H1N1): A Parent Resource: www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf

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