



NEWS

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Illinois Department of Public Health

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Fall Flu Season Guidance for Higher Education

State public health department offers advice to keep students, faculty and staff from getting sick with the flu

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – As students arrive on campuses to begin the fall semester, Dr. Damon T. Arnold, state public health director, today stressed the importance of Illinois higher education institutions following new federal guidance designed to help keep students, faculty and staff healthy during the upcoming flu season.

“The seasonal flu and H1N1 flu will be circulating at the same time this flu season. However, unlike the seasonal flu, the H1N1 virus appears to be impacting a younger population, including college-aged students not accustomed to getting a flu shot or a severe case of the flu,” Dr. Arnold said. “The Department is urging colleges and universities to follow federal strategies to help reduce exposure to the flu and keep students, faculty members and other staff healthy, while at the same time continuing to hold classes.”

Dr. Arnold recommended the following guidance:

- Encourage students, faculty and staff (except those with contraindications) to get a seasonal flu shot as soon as the vaccine is available.
- Separate people who are sick from those who are well as soon as possible.
- Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette – practice the 3 Cs.
 - **Clean** – wash your hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs.
 - **Cover** - your cough or sneeze with your elbow or sleeve.
 - **Contain** – students and staff should stay home if they’re sick.
- Establish a method for maintaining contact with students who are sick.

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- Encourage those who are sick to stay at home or in their residence until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more. If possible, students, faculty and staff who live in campus housing should return to their family's home while ill.
- Discourage visitors with flu-like illness from attending institution-sponsored events until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours.
- Establish regular schedules for frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, such as desks, tables, chairs, cafeterias, doorknobs, handrails and computers.

Should illnesses from H1N1 flu become more severe, IDPH may suggest additional guidance, including:

- Suspend classes. Institution administrators should work closely with local health officials when deciding to suspend classes and consider various criteria, such as not being able to maintain normal functioning or the flu starts causing severe illnesses in many people.
- Cancel, postpone or discourage mass gatherings, including sporting events, performances, commencement ceremonies and fraternity/sorority parties.

The Department is encouraging everyone, except those with contraindications, to get a seasonal influenza flu shot this year as soon as it is available in their communities. Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect against becoming ill with the flu.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working to develop a vaccine for H1N1 flu, which is separate from the seasonal flu vaccine. Initial shipments of H1N1 vaccine are expected to be available in mid-October. The seasonal flu vaccine is one shot for most people, but it's anticipated the H1N1 vaccine will require two shots. The H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine – it is intended to be used in addition to seasonal flu vaccine.

For more information log onto www.ready.illinois.gov.

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