



COUNTY OF ORANGE HEALTH CARE AGENCY

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Reducing 2009 Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Transmission and Use of Personal Protective Equipment in the School (K-12) Setting

The following information comes from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) documents.

Interim Recommendations for Facemask and Respirator Use to Reduce 2009 Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Transmission (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm>)

In areas with confirmed human cases of 2009 influenza A (H1N1) virus infection, the risk for infection can be reduced through a combination of actions. **No single action will provide complete protection**, but an approach combining the following steps can help decrease the likelihood of transmission. These recommended actions are:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub
- People who are sick with an influenza-like illness (ILI) (fever plus at least cough or sore throat and possibly other symptoms like runny nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea) should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel, for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- Avoid close contact (i.e. being within about 6 feet) with persons with ILI.

Use of N95 respirators or facemasks generally is not recommended for workers in non-healthcare occupational settings for general work activities. For specific work activities that involve contact with people who have ILI, such as escorting a person with ILI, interviewing a person with ILI, providing assistance to an individual with ILI, the following are recommended:

- workers should try to maintain a distance of 6 feet or more from the person with ILI;
- workers should keep their interactions with ill persons as brief as possible;
- the ill person should be asked to follow good cough etiquette and hand hygiene and to wear a facemask, if able, and one is available;
- workers at increased risk of severe illness from influenza infection should avoid people with ILI (possibly by temporary reassignment); and,
- where workers cannot avoid close contact with persons with ILI, some workers may choose to wear a facemask or N95 respirator on a voluntary basis. The effectiveness of respirators and facemasks in preventing transmission of 2009 H1N1 (or seasonal influenza) in various settings is not known. Use of a facemask or respirator is likely to be of most benefit if used correctly and

consistently when exposed to an ill person. Note: OSHA requires “Employers who allow their employees to wear respirators on a voluntary basis when not required by OSHA or the employer must implement limited provisions of a respiratory protection program.” See <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/respiratory/voluntaryuses.html>.

Technical Report for State and Local Public Health Officials and School Administrators on CDC Guidance for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza during the 2009-2010 School Year
(<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/technicalreport.htm>)

- Students and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the day should be promptly separated from other students and staff in a room where they can be separated by at least 6 feet from others
- They should be sent home promptly.
- A limited number of staff should be designated to care for ill persons until they can be sent home.
 - When possible, these should be people with limited interactions with other students and staff and therefore decreased risk of spreading influenza.
 - These persons should not be at increased risk of influenza complications (for example, pregnant women) and they should be familiar with infection control recommendations to prevent spread of influenza.
- When possible and if the sick person can tolerate it, he or she should wear a surgical mask when near other persons.
- CDC recommends that staff who provide care for persons with known, probable or suspected influenza or influenza-like illness use appropriate personal protective equipment.
 - Healthcare staff working in school-based clinics should follow the interim CDC guidance for healthcare settings regarding personal protective equipment in caring for patients with ILI (http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm).
 - School staff supervising students with ILI waiting to be picked up should follow the interim CDC recommendations for facemask and respirator use (included above; full document available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm>).

Note that OSHA has requirements for employers regarding both required and voluntary respirator use, which are contained in the Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134), available at: http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=12716

School district administrators may wish to consult with their occupational health provider regarding a Respiratory Protection Program and its integration into the district Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (see Illness and Injury Prevention Regulations at <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3203.html>).