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HIGHLAND FALLS-FORT MONTGOMERY SCHOOLS REMAIN OPEN BUT PARENTS SHOULD PREPARE

Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery schools remain open despite the confirmation of swine flu cases in a private school in Queens, New York City. Parents are asked, however, to prepare for possible closures if the new virus continues to spread. School and local health officials are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

Parents can take action to protect their children and help prevent the spread of the flu. They should, however, also plan ahead in the event a local health emergency is declared and schools are required to close.

“At this time, the local health department has advised us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school,” Dr. Debra Jackson said. “School will remain open. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best practices for infection control as well as cleaning practices for our schools. However, to keep flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with flu-like symptoms or respiratory illness will be sent home.”

Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may be experienced with swine flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. If you suspect your child is getting flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to the virus. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

If swine flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials advise that it may become necessary to close schools for a period of time. It is important for families to plan ahead and prepare for the possibility that schools may be closed.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of swine flu as they would colds and other seasonal flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. That’s the same distance as a yardstick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Again, this is an evolving situation. The district continues to receive regular information and support from the State Department of Health, the State Education Department, the State Emergency Management Office, and the Orange County Department of Health We will keep you updated with pertinent information as it becomes available.

For more information on swine flu, visit www.nyhealth.gov, www.schoolhealthservicesny.com or www.cdc.gov or the 24 hour toll-free hotline that New Yorkers across the State can use to get answers to their questions. The hotline is 1-800-808-1987.

Local Website information can be found on www.hffmcsd.org