

What can you do?

Help your child's childminder, nursery, pre-school group, school or out-of-school club by making sure they have up to date contact details for you: your address, telephone numbers (home, work and mobile) and email as appropriate.

They will need to get in touch with you if there is a case of flu among the children, or they suspect the children may be at risk.

Also make sure that your child:

- uses soap and water when washing their hands
- covers their mouth when coughing or sneezing (with a tissue, not with their hands)
- throws dirty tissues away quickly into bins
- Following these simple precautions will help slow the spread of the virus.

Should schools be closing now?

At this time schools should be operating normally. If a pupil is suspected of having a virus that might be swine flu – even if the child is currently out of school – the school should take advice from local public health advisers. Unless they advise the school to close as a precautionary measure, the school should stay open.

What if it becomes a pandemic?

If the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued a level 6 alert, it would not change the situation. Schools should still remain open until they are advised to close: either by their public health advisers for reasons specific to the school; or if the government determines that the risk to children is such that all schools should close when the pandemic reaches their area.

Why is it important for schools and other services to close?

Influenza spreads rapidly in schools and other closed communities. If schools and childcare settings close at the right time, it could significantly reduce the spread of infection and the number of children infected.

How can you find out if your child's school is closing?

If possible, the school should contact you during the day to advise you of the coming closure, so that you can start to make plans. Otherwise you should be told when you collect your child at the end of the day, or your child will be given a letter to take home.

Will your child be able to learn while the school is closed?

If schools are closed for an extended period, students should be provided with some teaching and learning materials. If schools operate an online learning environment they should use it to set, distribute, receive and mark homework.

Who decides if an independent school should close?

It is for the proprietor or governing body of an independent school to take any decision on closure, taking into account advice from local health protection teams. If the government were to advise all schools in an area to close, it would be up to independent schools to decide whether to follow that advice. In practice it is expected that independent schools will follow the government's advice, and the Independent Schools Association have advised their members to follow health advice.

Travelling from Mexico

If a pupil or a member of staff has come back from Mexico, they should come into school if they have no symptoms, even if they have been in contact with a suspected case (unless they have been given specific advice not to attend school by a medical practitioner).

If pupils refuse to attend schools, will they be punished for truancy?

If schools are open, parents should send their children to school unless they have any symptoms. They will be advised if the school is to close and what to do then. These decisions will be made by health professionals with expert knowledge who will always have the interests of pupils in mind. Parents are urged not to withdraw their children unless given this advice. Local authorities will decide on any action against parents keeping healthy children off school.

Source: - http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Swineflu/DG_178075?cid=rss