



**Memorandum
April 26, 2009**

**TO: UFT CHAPTER LEADERS
UFT DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES
UFT SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES**

**FROM: RANDI WEINGARTEN, UFT PRESIDENT
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In response to the report of swine flu cases in New York City, we have been working all weekend to put this memo together so that you could have it tonight. We consulted with the Commissioner of Office of Emergency Management as well as a number of representatives from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH). We have also been in contact with the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE).

Swine Flu in New York City

The United States declared a public health emergency on Sunday, April 26, 2009. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) has been investigating a cluster of respiratory illness in students at St. Francis Preparatory (a non-public school) in Queens. On Sunday, April 26, 2009 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed cases of swine flu influenza among these students. The school is suspending classes on Monday, April 27th because there may be students who are incubating the disease. The affected students have only experienced mild symptoms and many are already improving.

The DOH also investigated a cluster of children with illness in a Bronx Daycare facility but so far has not identified any confirmed or probable swine flu cases.

In response to confirmed cases of swine flu in Mexico, California, Kansas, Ohio and Texas, the DOH is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assess the possibility of the spread of swine flu.

What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory infection caused by type A influenza viruses that regularly cause outbreaks of influenza in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu but human infections can occur.

Symptoms

The symptoms of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Swine flu can vary in severity from mild to severe.

Transmission

The CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and can spread from human to human. However, at this time, it not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

Human-to-human spread of swine flu has been documented and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through proximity (within six feet) to infected persons who are coughing or sneezing. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Swine flu cannot be transmitted from eating pork or pork products.

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

A person is infectious as long as there are symptoms and for up to 7 days following onset of these symptoms. Children, especially young children, may be potentially contagious for even longer.

Medicines to treat swine flu

The CDC says two flu drugs, Tamiflu and Relenza, seem effective against the new strain. These antiviral drugs fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body.

Is there a vaccine for swine flu?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu.

Preventive measures

CDC has the usual recommendations for people, which are:

- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are effective.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

When to seek health care and treatment

Patients experiencing severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment. Otherwise the NYCDOH recommends at-home care.

The UFT has been working with the NYCDOHMH and the NYCDOE to make sure the following measures are in place in schools:

1. Ventilation is important. Given the mild weather keep classroom windows wide open as much as possible, weather permitting.
2. Mechanical ventilation systems should be run with maximum outside air. Make sure all exhaust systems are operable.
3. Provide for stepped-up cleaning of all classrooms, cafeterias and lunchrooms, bathrooms, gymnasiums and other common areas.
4. Staff and students should be notified to wash hands frequently.
5. There must be running water and adequate amounts of soap and paper towels in bathrooms.
6. Staff with flu like symptoms should be seen by their personal physician and obtain medical documentation. Keep a copy of the documentation.

7. Children with unidentified respiratory illness should be sent to the medical room for assessment. According to the NYCDOHMH, if the nurse determines that the student has flu symptoms the nurse should keep the student in the medical room or nearby until they are picked up by their parents or legal guardians. Children with respiratory symptoms from known causes, such as asthma, should be managed as usual.
8. Staff and students with flu-like symptoms should stay home.

We will update you as more information becomes available.

Further information about swine flu can be found at the links below:

From New York City Health Department

Facts about flu

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdinflu.shtml>

From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

General information about swine flu

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm

Swine Flu Case Definitions

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/casedef_swineflu.htm

Swine Flu Infection Control and Patient Care

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidelines_infection_control.htm

Preventing the Flu

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>