

The recent outbreak of Novel (H1N1) Influenza, also referred to as the Swine Flu, has caused concern for many. The outbreak spread globally and was declared a Pandemic by the World Health Organization. Last school year, the Douglas County School System shared the concern and worked closely with Public Health and The Department of Education in responding. In anticipation of the outbreak, much planning had occurred over the past two years. The School Systems response benefitted greatly because of prior planning and the relationships established with local and state responding agencies. Since the outbreak, the response plan of the School System has been revised to prepare for the possibility future outbreaks.

Federal and State Health Agencies are concerned about another flare-up of Novel (H1N1) Influenza occurring this fall. That flare-up could be of the same severity—or possibly much worse. We therefore need your help to prevent the spread of illness in our schools – not just swine flu, but any kind of virus. There are everyday actions you can take to stay healthy, and please encourage your children to follow these simple steps too.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if no tissue is available.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Keep sick children home from school and limit contact with others to prevent spread of infection.

Staying informed during a health crisis or event is vital. To facilitate this, we will post information on our website at www.douglas.k12.ga.us and on Comcast Channel 24. Parents are encouraged to sign up for the “Notify Me” link available on the district or your school site for immediate notification of news updates. Other informative websites are the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov, and CDPH, www.cobbanddouglaspublichealth.org