

## Swine Flu (H1N1): A Guide For Parents

Dear Parent,

As you may be aware, there have been concerns over some cases of swine flu (H1N1 flu) in the city, and an increasing number of media reports.

To help you understand what this means for you and your child, the Healthspring team would like to share some information on it, including common questions that you may have and also provides guidance for you to protect your children from swine flu.

Please go through it and call us, or write to us, in case there are any further questions or if you require further information. You can reach us at [Shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in](mailto:Shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in), call 61303535 and ask to speak to Dr. Khullar, or call 9833008636 and speak with Shivani Dawlatjada.

Most important, there have been only isolated incidents so far, and diagnosed correctly and treated early, there should be absolutely no cause for you to worry. At the same time, Oberoi International School and Healthspring are taking it seriously, and we are fully geared to provide the appropriate medical guidance, including recommended medical treatment, as well as immunization in case it is required.

### **What is swine flu?**

The swine flu or H1N1 flu virus is a variant on the flu virus, and infects the nose, throat and lungs causing fever, cough, sore throat, running nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Any sudden high fever with body ache is a pointer towards viral fever- commonly known in medical parlance as “flu”. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhoea. Bronchitis, sinus and ear infections may occur as flu-related complications. While the disease is very contagious, fatalities are very rare.

### **How serious is the flu?**

H1N1 is just one of the variations of the flu. Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. It can be more dangerous for young children and patients of any age who have certain long term health conditions, including asthma, heart kidney, liver, disease, diabetes and patients whose immune system is weakened. Young children, the elderly and pregnant women are a particularly vulnerable group.

### **How does the flu spread?**

Flu viruses spread mainly through droplets created when people with the flu cough, or sneeze. Less often, a person might get the flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

### **How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?**

People with the flu may be able to infect others by shedding virus from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after, though in some case it may be longer, hence once viral fever is diagnosed 7 days rest is recommended.

### **How do I protect my child against the flu?**

Make sure your child washes hands often, and limit their exposure to sick children. Every time they come home from outside, they should wash their hands with copious soap lather – in fact, this is a good habit to be followed *all throughout* and not only during flu season!

In addition, taking a flu vaccine is highly recommended, for yourself, your child, and those that may be in regular contact with your child (e.g. driver or ayah). This year's flu vaccine also includes the H1N1 strain, and provides protection against that as well as other strains of the flu.

- Do contact your doctor to know specific details of taking the vaccination
- If your child is already down with fever and cold, then it is not an appropriate time to take vaccination and vaccination can be done later. Otherwise the Flu vaccine is absolutely safe.
- You can also get the vaccine at any of the Healthspring centres (details at [www.healthspring.in](http://www.healthspring.in)). In addition, for two days this week (Thursday and Friday), the Healthspring paediatrician and team will be on hand at OIS during school hours to administer the vaccine at school itself. The charge is the same as at Healthspring centres, Rs. 750. If you would like your child to be vaccinated, please let the school know.

### **Is there a medicine to treat the flu?**

Antiviral drugs can treat flu illness and may prevent complications, like pneumonia. These drugs work best when started during the first 2 days of illness, and can be given to children and pregnant women.

In the case of H1N1, there are specific medications that can be administered to both adults and children. The medications are strictly controlled by the public health department, with only a few sources of supply.

Antiviral medication (Tami- Flu®) specific to H1N1 virus and other strains of “Flu” virus should not be taken as “preventive” measures, as this will make the medicine ineffective. It is because of this that tight control is maintained by public health authorities.

However, your doctor, or Healthspring, will be able to assist you in obtaining a dose for a confirmed case of H1N1, if required.

### **What are some of the other ways I can protect my child against the flu?**

In addition to getting vaccinated, take steps to prevent the spread of germs, such as:

- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to keep the sick person separate from others in the household, if possible.
- Clean surfaces like bedside tables, in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys by wiping them a household disinfectant.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw it in the trash after use.
- Avoid going to a crowded place like the movie theatre
- Instruct your child to keep a distance of at least 3 ft from a child or an adult who is having a bout of sneezing and visibly ill

### **What can I do if my child gets sick?**

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness. H1N1 is still very rare, and in most cases you child will have a regular strain of the flu. Even in the case of H1N1, there is no reason to worry unduly, but you should follow-up with your paediatrician.

A diagnostic test can be administered that confirms or rules out H1N1, and your paediatrician may make a clinical diagnosis as well.

Take adequate medical advice and precautions, as you would with the flu. Ensure your child has plenty of rest at home, has a nourishing diet and drinks plenty of fluids.

### **What if my child seems very sick?**

Take your child to a doctor right away if they have any of the warning signs below:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids (not making as much urine as they normally do)
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

### **Can my child go to school if he or she is sick?**

No. Your child should stay home to rest, as well as to avoid giving the flu to other children. Remember, the best-proven non-medical treatment in Flu is: Bed Rest, Bed Rest and Bed Rest!

### **When can my child go back to school after having the flu?**

Keep your child home from school or day care for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. (A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher).

### **What is Oberoi International School doing to ensure my child's safety?**

While there is no need to worry, OIS is taking the matter seriously, and has put in place a few key measures to ensure your children are safe and healthy:

- Nurses have been instructed to be vigilant, and clear protocols are in place to prevent any illness from spreading
- The Healthspring paediatrician, Dr. Khullar, will be on hand whenever required, as well as at school for additional hours
- Should any parent wish their child to be vaccinated, Dr. Khullar will be at school for a few days this week and next to administer the vaccine. Parents who wish to have their child vaccinated should contact the school and reserve the slot
- Should the parent wish, a diagnostic test for H1N1 can be administered at school, at the Healthspring centre, or by appointment at home.
- However, the best “diagnostic test” is a high degree of suspicion caused by the onset of severity of symptoms (sudden high fever, appearance of new symptoms like headache-vomiting) and confirmation of suspicion by your paediatrician.

We hope this answers your questions, and be assured that Oberoi International School and Healthspring are vigilant, and will help keep your child healthy. Please do feel free to reach out to us if you have any more questions.