

August 28, 2009

Dear Parents,

I would like to ask you, the parents, to join the Claiborne County Board of Education and the team put together by the State of Tennessee, which includes your public health officials, doctors, and hospitals, in the coming school months to make sure that our children have a healthy environment in which to learn. A vaccine against the H1N1(Swine) flu is under development. We are making plans to acquire the vaccine to give to students with parental permission.

One of the first things that you might ask is: How dangerous is the swine flu? The public health officials and doctors with whom I have consulted say it looks very much like seasonal flu so far. Most people suffer unpleasant but not life-threatening symptoms such as some or all of the following: fever, body aches, sore throat and runny nose. Vomiting and diarrhea are normally rare for adults with flu.

Our school officials and public health officials are monitoring the situation closely. Each of our school nurses are monitoring closely as well as our principals and our teachers.

How do you know if you have swine flu? You cannot know for sure if you have the new H1N1 flu unless you get a test. Only a lab test can confirm whether you have it or not. The Health Department will notify us if any cases are confirmed. H1N1 flu is treated as any other seasonal flu. Most people get well by resting, staying hydrated and taking medicines to reduce fever. If your child contracts the flu please keep them home until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever medications.

How can you and your child protect yourself from the flu? Participate in the vaccine program if you choose. Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. The virus spreads through respiratory droplets in a cough or sneeze, and people start spreading the virus a day before they develop symptoms. Please urge your child to cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. You can also get the flu by touching something that has flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose.

If swine flu is going around your child's school, should you keep him or her home? No. We are following the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control which states that schools monitor closely for ill children and staff, isolate them quickly and send them home, but schools have been advised to remain open for classes.

Children spread infections easily to one another because they excrete viruses in greater amounts than adults and for longer periods. Each school in Claiborne County is taking steps to curb the spread of diseases by making sure paper towel and soap dispensers are well stocked in bathrooms. Please urge your child to wash their hands often or use hand sanitizer.

Thank you for your help and support to maintain a healthy environment for the students of Claiborne County. Please call Richie Hoskins at the Claiborne County Board of Education (626-3543) if you have concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. C. Eddie Shoffner
Director of Claiborne County Schools