

Albuquerque Public Schools, like school districts across the state and nation, is seeing widespread, mild cases of H1N1. So far, our students with flu-like symptoms have been able to return to the classroom in 3 to 5 days. Currently, student absentee rates range from 3 to 17 percent at schools throughout the district.

We know that you have questions, and we want you to know what we're doing to fight the flu in our schools.

Why isn't APS closing schools right now?

Following the advice of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH), APS does not plan to close schools due to these mild cases of H1N1. In the past, the CDC found that students continued to gather in public places when they were dismissed from school, rather than staying home, and exposed one another to the H1N1 virus. Additionally, parents were losing income unnecessarily.

When will APS close schools?

Along with the NMDOH and the State Public Education Department, APS could decide to close schools only if attendance reaches a level which makes operations of a school impractical.

Why isn't APS reporting the number of children who are sick with H1N1?

Because the New Mexico Department of Health only tests and tracks severe cases of H1N1, we cannot confirm a number of H1N1 cases in our schools. However, we believe many of our students and staff with flu-like symptoms have mild cases of H1N1. We also anticipate that the number of cases will continue to increase over the next few weeks until people have a chance to be immunized against the virus.

What is APS doing to fight the flu?

First and foremost, we are encouraging prevention. We are also asking that students and staff stay home if they're sick.

Here's what we're doing across the district:

- We're encouraging hand washing in classrooms
- We're teaching students how to wash their hands properly, and how to sneeze and cough into a tissue or their elbows
- We've hung posters in school restrooms to remind students and staff about how to properly wash their hands
- We're stocking restrooms with soap and towels for hand washing
- We're routinely cleaning areas that students and staff touch often
- We're teaching school staff, including bus drivers and school crossing guards, to identify students with flu-like symptoms and encouraging them to bring these students to the school nurse for evaluation
- We're distributing face masks to children who display flu-like symptoms, and we're calling their parents to pick these children up so that they can be cared for at home
- We're working closely with the New Mexico Department of Health
- We have a pandemic flu policy in place
- Immunizations:
 - 33 APS schools are part of a pilot project to provide free seasonal flu shots for all students and staff.
 - All APS employees are being offered free seasonal flu shots in October.
 - Additionally, pharmacies are expected to provide seasonal flu immunizations at school sites for employees.
 - When the H1N1 immunization becomes available in late October, we plan to provide it to all APS health care providers, students and staff at New Futures, and all APS preschoolers and caregivers.

How do I protect my family from getting sick?

New Mexico Department of Health and the CDC recommend these flu-fighting tips:

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
2. Cover your cough and sneeze by sneezing into a tissue or your elbow
3. Stay home if you're sick with coughing, sore throat AND fever of 100 degrees or more
4. Avoid contact with people who display flu symptoms
5. Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Seasonal flu and H1N1 have the same symptoms, including:

Fever of 100 degrees or more; Cough; Sore throat; Chills; Fatigue; Body aches; Vomiting; and Diarrhea

What should I do if my child is sick?

If your child exhibits flu-like symptoms, please don't send him or her to school. Don't let your child return to school until 24 hours after he or she is fever-free without medicine. Remember that your child doesn't need a doctor's note to return to school. Read more: <http://ww2.aps.edu/cgi/displaypress2.cgi?1315>

If your child misses more than one day of school, call the school for makeup work.

More Information

- Information for you and your family from the NM Department of Health:

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/H1N1/public.shtml>

- Flu Advice from the CDC:

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/H1N1/documents/H1N1AdvicefromtheCDCforParents.pdf>

- What to do if your Child is Sick from flu.gov: <http://flu.gov/individualfamily/parents/index.html#whattodo>