

**Trinity Lutheran Preschool  
H1N1 Parent Information Letter  
September 10, 2009**

As the opening of school approaches, the Whatcom County Health Department asked that we take this opportunity to update you on the current situation with 2009 H1N1 influenza (earlier referred to as “swine flu”) and how it might affect school operations. Typically, influenza outbreaks occur no earlier than mid-December. This year, however, the virus has remained active over the summer and we may see school outbreaks in the fall. This is especially true because the H1N1 virus appears to be disproportionately affecting children and young adults.

Right now, the H1N1 virus does not appear to be causing severe disease in people with the exception of individuals with asthma or other underlying health conditions, although this could change. We are working closely with the Whatcom County Health Department to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take to protect our students. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available. If the flu becomes more severe, we may need to take additional steps to prevent the spread of the virus.

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. We want to keep school open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. We need your help to do this.

The Whatcom County Health Department has stated that the most important step toward prevention of flu outbreaks is for sick children to remain at home.

Trinity Lutheran Preschool has informed its teachers to keep their children home if they are ill. Teachers have also been reminded to stay home if they are ill.

The preschool reminds all families and staff members of the symptoms of the flu, including:  
A fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater)

Cough

Sore throat

Runny or stuffy nose

Body aches

Headache

Feeling very tired

Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea

Families of Trinity Lutheran Preschool should follow these important steps:

1. Keep sick children at home for 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of students who are infected with the H1N1 virus.
2. Let teacher know when you call to report your child's absence or write a note if the illness is cough-related. To help track flu outbreaks locally among children, the Whatcom County Health Department has requested that our school staff ask parents who call to report student absences due to illness if the illness is cough-related. Please be aware that beginning with the start of this school year, our teachers will ask for this information when parents call to report student absences due to illness. This is for the purpose of community disease tracking in conjunction with the Whatcom County Health Department and the Washington State Department of Health.
3. **Do not send your child to school if he or she is sick.** Children with suspected influenza-like illness will be sent home. Teachers will contact parents/guardians to pick up their sick child as soon as possible.
4. Make a plan so that you or your emergency contact can pick up a sick child from school as soon as possible after being notified by school staff members. If your child becomes ill during the school day, he or she will be promptly removed from other students and wait for pick-up in a separate area (where available) with a staff member.

Please be aware that your child may be given a mask to wear while he or she waits for pick up to help prevent the spread of illness to staff and other students, according to health department recommendations.

5. Check that your emergency contact numbers on file at the preschool are current and accurate. It will be very important that school staff is able to contact you so that your child can be picked up from school as soon as possible after any notification of illness.
6. Make a family plan so that a responsible adult can care for an ill child for several days if necessary.

Here are a few additional things you can do to help:

Please have your child wash their hands before they come into the class each day.

Teach your child to wash his or her hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. Staff sets a good example by doing this themselves.

Teach your child not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils.

Teach your child to cover his or her coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up coughs or sneezes by using an arm or sleeve (instead of the hand) is also appropriate when a tissue is unavailable.

Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.

Trinity Lutheran Preschool will be implementing other prevention techniques. We will make sure that hand washing stations have plenty of soap, hot water (where available) and hand-drying supplies. Teachers will remind students to wash their hands often. They will remind children to cover their cough with their arm or sleeve. We will take extra care to disinfect common surfaces such as door handles, tables, etc.

For more information visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. We will notify you of any additional changes to our strategy to prevent the spread of flu.