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## **RESIDENTS ASKED TO PREVENT SPREAD OF NOVEL H1N1 FLU AS STUDENTS RETURN TO CLASSES**

**FORT WALTON BEACH** – Anticipating an increase in flu-like illnesses as students return to classes, Okaloosa County Health Department officials remind residents of the steps they can take to prevent the spread of flu-like illnesses such as novel H1N1 flu. Parents of K – 12 Students are asked to Action Steps for Parents going home or arriving by mail during the first week of school on preventing novel H1N1 flu. Parents can get the Action Step fact sheets from the health department's website at [www.HealthyOkaloosa.com](http://www.HealthyOkaloosa.com).

"Federal and state health officials tell us that outbreaks of flu-like illnesses including novel H1N1 flu are likely when children return to school," said Okaloosa County Health Department Director Dr. Karen Chapman. "Adults and children who are sick should stay home to avoid infecting others."

Businesses, colleges and universities now have similar resources available to them through the CDC's Preparing for the flu: A communication toolkit for business (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/>) and Preparing for the flu: A communication toolkit for higher education ([www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools)). The health department has e-mailed these resources to Okaloosa-area chambers, cities, the county, and the college.

The health department recommends that parents and teachers explain to students and businesses explain to their employees the importance of the following basic preventive hygiene measures:

- Stay home when sick for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever without the use of fever reducing medicine.
- Make it a routine to wash your hands often with soap and water. Visit [http://www.cdc.gov/sesame.html?s\\_cid=healthyHabits\\_001](http://www.cdc.gov/sesame.html?s_cid=healthyHabits_001) to learn the Sesame Street Hand Washing song.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands.
- Cough into your sleeve or into a tissue, not into your hands.
- Avoid contact with those who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Get your seasonal flu shot. This shot will not prevent novel H1N1 flu. That vaccine is expected to be available in late fall.

"Informed parents, students and employees are our partners in this effort to prevent the spread of novel H1N1 flu. Staying home when sick is best." said Dr. Chapman.

Symptoms of the novel H1N1 flu are similar to the seasonal flu. Symptoms include fever (100°F or greater), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

If an adult or child becomes sick with flu-like symptoms, including fever, sore throat or cough, consider contacting your physician by phone, particularly if you are worried about the symptoms. Contact the physician by phone before going to the office or clinic so that the adult or child does not expose others in the waiting room. Each person's physician will determine their appropriate care including staying home from school or work if they are sick.

For additional information about taking care of a sick person in your home, and CDC guidance for specific groups, visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu).

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