

**CIRCULAR FOR PARENTS**

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**Dear Parents,**

It's that time of the year when most of the children tend to catch common Flu. However, in the current scenario there may be slight chances that it may be the 'Swine Flu' that the child may be suffering from. At Redbricks, we would like to answer some of the commonly asked questions, so that you are aware of the precautions and there is no unnecessary panic.

**SWINE FLU (H1N1)**

**What is it ?**

Although the name "swine flu" brings up a lot of extra fear and worry, it is important to note that swine flu is an influenza A H1N1 virus. The big difference is that the current swine influenza A(H1N1) virus has components of pig and bird influenza viruses in it, so that humans don't have any immunity to it. That is what made it more likely to become a pandemic virus because it can easily spread from person to person.

**How does it spread?**

The new 'Swine Flu' virus is highly contagious i.e. it spreads from person to person. Children especially under the age of five are more likely to catch this flu (or any other infection) as their immune systems are still maturing. The virus is spread through the droplets that come out of the nose or mouth when someone coughs or sneezes and do not cover their face. If someone is very nearby he/she might breathe them in; or if someone coughs or sneezes into their hand, those droplets and the virus within them are easily transferred to surfaces that the person touches, such as door handles, hand rails, telephones and keyboards. If someone touches these surfaces and touches his/her face, the virus can enter his/her system and he/she can become infected.

**Who is generally affected?**

- Young children, especially those under 2 years of age
- People with asthma.
- People with COPD or other chronic lung conditions
- People with cardiovascular conditions (except high blood pressure)
- People with liver problems
- People with kidney problems
- People with blood disorders, including sickle cell disease
- People with neurologic disorders
- Elderly people are at high risk of severe flu disease -- if they get it. Relatively few swine flu cases have been seen in people over age 65.

## **What precautions should we take with children to avoid**

### **‘Swine Flu’?**

- Washing hands with soap and water can reduce the chance of infection by 30 per cent. Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand cleaner when soap and water are not available.
- Clean hard surfaces (like door handles and remote controls) frequently with a normal cleaning product.
- Teach them not to touch their face and mouth, as germs on their hand may find their way into their body.
- If they have a cough or a cold, make sure they use a tissue when they cough or sneeze and then throw it away. Ensure they wash their hands after this also.
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick, especially with flu-like symptoms.
- If one child has flu like symptoms, while another does not, try to keep them isolated from each other. Do this gently in a way that is fair to both children so that the one with the flu like symptoms does not feel that they are at fault.
- Try to avoid areas that are too crowded where people are breathing very close to your children for e.g. crowded markets, fairs, packed temples etc.
- If someone has returned from abroad, go see them or have them visit you after they have spent a week or so in India. This will give time for them to manifest any flu symptoms.
- Getting swine flu vaccination for your child

## **What are the Common Symptoms to identify ‘Swine Flu’?**

Symptoms of swine flu are like any other flu. Call your child’s paediatrician immediately if your child has any of the following symptoms and a temperature of 100° F or above or feels hot:

- Tiredness • Headache • Runny nose and sneezing • Sore throat • Shortness of breath • Loss of appetite • Vomiting and diarrhoea • Aching muscles, limb and joint pain.

## **What should I do if I see these symptoms in my child?**

Don’t panic. You cannot confirm if your child has swine flu just based on these symptoms. As soon as you see the symptoms above, call your child’s paediatrician and inform them that your child’s flu like symptoms before you drop into their clinic. They may want to take precautions to ensure that you do not spread it to other people there.

Kindly make sure that yours as well as your child’s face is covered and that he/she does not touch any surfaces there. Thereafter, make sure to wash yours as well as your child’s hands after the visit.

Please do not send your child to the school, for atleast 5-7 days, if he/she has flu like symptoms such as fever, cough, running nose or difficulty in breathing. It may be the common Flu but we should not take a chance, as even that is highly contagious.

In case it is a Swine Flu, it can be treated with antiviral medications if given in time; so getting your child treated immediately can save your child’s life.

**Please note that in case a child is found to have flu-like symptoms, the school will ask the parents to keep the child away from school until he/she is medically fit to return to school along with a doctor’s certificate. This is done in the interest of the health of all the children in the school.**

**With warm regards,**

*Dr. Gargi Singh*  
**The Principal**  
**Redbricks Primary School**