



Charles R. Nagle
Superintendent of Schools

Sandra Carraway
Deputy Superintendent of Schools

COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

4781 Hereford Farm Road
Evans, Georgia 30809
(706) 541-0650
www.ccboe.net

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Dear Parents:

Most of us have heard news reports about cases of swine flu in the U.S. and other countries. As of April 29, 2009, there are no known cases of swine flu in Georgia. However, we want to share some basic information about swine flu, how we're responding, and what we all can do to help insure the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and our entire community!

Swine flu is a respiratory disease of pigs that does not normally infect humans; however, human infections with swine flu do occur. This current strain of swine flu has begun to spread from human to human, causing illness. The symptoms of swine flu in people are often similar to regular seasonal flu and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

The Columbia County School System has a close relationship with the Columbia County Health Department. If any local cases of swine flu are discovered, we would be notified by the Health Department. Likewise, if our teachers or nurses see students with flu-like symptoms, we will share this important information with the Department.

To help prevent the spread of illness in our schools and to stay healthy, there are everyday actions we all can take. To that end, we ask that our parents take note of and encourage their children to take the following simple steps:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, as germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If your child gets sick, please keep him or her home from school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. If your child is ill and has recently traveled to an area affected by swine flu or has been in contact with someone who has been infected with swine flu, contact your child's healthcare provider immediately.

For more information about swine flu, visit the website of the Coastal Health District at www.gachd.org or the CDC at www.cdc.gov.