

Date: April 29, 2009

Dear CUMC Students:

As you may know, a number of confirmed cases of mild swine flu have been identified in New York City.

Columbia will follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other appropriate agencies in fashioning the University's responses to a matter of understandable public concern. Currently, there are no changes to University operations or activities based on these public health recommendations. The CDC has recommended avoiding non-essential travel to Mexico during this time.

The best thing to do for the present is to practice normal precautionary hygiene such as regular hand-washing. If you have flu-like symptoms, it is recommended that you stay home from work or school and avoid public activities. Tips for preventing the flu are listed at the end of this email.

If you come to the Student Health Service for evaluation, please identify yourself on arrival as having flu-like symptoms. If you are a clinical student and have flu-like symptoms that include fever, please come to the SHS BEFORE reporting to your clinical rotation.

University leadership continues to monitor the situation closely and will keep you informed of any developments that affect the CU community. For ongoing updates and more prevention tips, please visit:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/studentervices/preparedness/>

Additionally, if you are interested in monitoring updates on your own, the most recent information is available on the CDC website. International updates are available on the World Health Organizations website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/index.htm>.

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

Tips for Preventing the Flu

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleanser especially after you cough or sneeze.
2. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or the elbow of your arm when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
4. Get an influenza shot annually. The current influenza vaccine formulation is not protective against avian or swine influenza. However, a recent study suggests annual influenza immunization of the elderly has a cumulative protective effect, resulting in reduced mortality, particularly in older individuals.
5. Clean items that are touched often, such as door or refrigerator handles, computer keyboards/mouse, phones and water faucets. Use any type of household cleanser or soap and water.
6. Avoid close contact with others who are ill. Avoid holding, hugging or kissing anyone who has a cold or the flu.

Sincerely,

Polly Wheat, MD
Director, Student Health Service - CUMC