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**Health Commissioner Frieden and Schools Chancellor Klein Announce City Will Close
Three Additional School Buildings in Response to Increased Flu-like Symptoms**

**City monitoring situation and reassessing daily; New Yorkers with underlying, chronic
health conditions should seek medical attention if exposed to flu**

May 17, 2009 – Health Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden and Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein today announced that the City Health Department has recommended closing three more school buildings in Queens for up to five school days after documenting unusually high and increasing levels of influenza-like illnesses. The three school buildings will be closed beginning Monday, May 18th.

The three school buildings are:

- M.S. 158Q (Marie Curie School; 1,143 students) in Bayside: 41 students were documented with influenza-like illness last week.
- Our Lady of Lourdes (424 students) in Queens Village: 37 students were documented with influenza-like illness last week.
- Q025 building (1,320 students) in Flushing, which includes I.S. 25Q or Adrien Block (825), the World Journalism Preparatory (445) and Q233 at Q025 (50): 27 students were documented with influenza-like illness last week in this building. All three of these schools will be closed beginning Monday.

Late last week the city closed five schools in Queens (I.S. 238, P.S. 16, I.S. 5, JHS 74 and P.S. 107) and one in Brooklyn (I.S. 318) after documenting confirmed cases of H1N1 at I.S. 238Q, and unusually high levels of flu-like symptoms in the other schools. The Health Department continues to work with the Department of Education to reassess the situation daily and make decisions regarding school closures on a case by case basis.

“We are now seeing a rising tide of flu in many parts of New York City,” said New York City Health Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden. “With the virus spreading widely, closing these and other individual schools will make little difference in transmission throughout New York City, but we hope will help slow transmission within the individual school communities. Given the large number of cases, it is entirely possible that in the coming days there will be people with severe illness from flu, particularly among people who have underlying health problems.”

“Our primary goal is to reduce the number of people who get seriously ill from the flu,” Frieden continued. “If you have underlying health conditions such as diabetes, emphysema, and asthma and have been exposed to someone with flu, see your doctor. Flu spreads, and that is what the H1N1 virus is doing. While the symptoms of H1N1 (SO) flu seem to resemble those of seasonal flu so far, the H1N1 virus appears to be spreading more rapidly at this time. Only time will tell how far, wide and long it will spread.”

Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein said, “Closing schools is a serious decision, particularly because it creates tremendous burdens for parents. We will be providing curriculum material on-line. Also, parents will be able to pick up the material at schools and other locations.”

In addition to suspending some schools with unusual clusters of illness, the Health Department advises any New Yorker who has flu symptoms and also has an underlying health condition such as asthma, pregnancy, emphysema or other lung disease or diabetes; a compromised immune system or cancer; to seek medical treatment. In addition, if an individual with such a medical condition has household or other close contact with someone with influenza, they should see their doctor to determine whether preventive medicine is needed. For students, staff, and household members of affected students and staff at schools which have been closed, those who have an underlying medical condition as stated above should also see their doctors to discuss the need for preventive medicine.

Symptoms of H1N1 (SO) include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting as well. Any New Yorker experiencing severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment. The best way to prevent additional cases of flu in schools is to stay home when sick, cover your mouth when coughing and sneezing, and wash hands frequently. For those who are ill, the recommendation is to stay home until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours.

Eating pork or pork products cannot spread H1N1 (SO) flu. The most effective way to lower the risk of spreading the flu is for anyone with a fever, cough or sore throat to stay home. The City’s Health Department urges everyone to continue taking these basic precautionary steps:

- Cover your mouth when you cough, either with your sleeve or a tissue or handkerchief.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid household or other close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a fever, cough or sore throat, stay home for at least 24 hours after all of your symptoms are gone.
- Stay away from clinics and hospitals unless you have severe symptoms, and notify your doctor or the clinic before you arrive, or as soon as you arrive, so that you can be appropriately isolated from others.

School and day care administrators, employers and managers of group living facilities should make sure to do the following to avoid the spread of illness:

- Keep shared spaces clean and well ventilated.
- Group living facilities should separate people who are sick
- Schools and employers should encourage those who are sick to stay at home, but should not require doctors’ notices to let healthy people return.
- Encourage hand washing and the covering of mouths when coughing. Educational posters are available on the Health Department’s website in English, Spanish and Chinese at www.nyc.gov.

Influenza can evolve in unpredictable ways; it is impossible to know whether H1N1 will dwindle, remain the same, or surge in coming weeks, and whether the illness will remain mild. Some severe cases may occur, including in people with underlying risk factors, such as young children, the elderly, and people with chronic medical conditions. The Health Department is watching closely for signs of increased virulence.

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