

# How To Help Young Children Understand A Pandemic Or Flu Outbreak:

## Things to remember when trying to understand a pandemic or flu outbreak:

- It's normal to worry about yourself and the children you care for.
- Everyone is touched by a pandemic flu.
- Grief and anger are normal reactions.
- Focusing on your strengths will help you cope.
- Everyone has different needs and different ways of coping - What are yours?
- Children often reflect the feelings of the adults in their environment.
- Your confidence and calm will help children feel more safe and secure.
- You are the children's role model for healthy habits and coping.
- Understand that information will change as more is learned or the situation changes.
- Learn all you can about the pandemic and seasonal flu from reliable sources so you can provide accurate information to parents and children. Provide written materials when you can.



## Helpful tips on what you can do to help young children understand a pandemic or flu outbreak:

- Keep routines and activities as consistent and normal as possible.
- Ask children about their understanding of "the flu."
- Allow children to express their feelings or understanding of illness through play. Encourage dramatic play themes like playing doctor or going to the hospital. Read simple and age appropriate books about illness and ways to stay healthy.
- Accept their feelings and provide simple explanations to their questions and misconceptions about "the flu."
- Advise parents to limit exposure to media and adult conversations about the flu.
- Let them know what they can do to avoid getting the pandemic flu.

## When talking to young children emphasize:

- Not everyone gets seriously ill with the flu.
- There are things we can do to stay healthy, like washing our hands, resting, etc.
- Parents and teachers are taking care of your health and safety.
- Your love for them
- Bullying, negatives comments or teasing about who has the flu is not acceptable. Everyone must be treated with respect.

## References:

1. Advice for Parents on Talking to Children About Novel H1N1 Flu Concerns  
[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/talkingtokids.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/talkingtokids.htm)
2. Talking to Children About Swine Flu (H1N1): A Parent Resource  
[www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking\\_With\\_Children\\_About\\_Flu\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf)

**For information on vaccinations check with your health care provider. Discuss your concerns if your child has chronic health conditions or allergies. Also check the City of Berkeley website [www.cityofberkeley.info/publichealth/](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/publichealth/) or call Nurse of the Day at (510) 981-5300 for information on vaccinations, finding a medical provider, OR APPLYING FOR Medi-Cal.**