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Red Cross Offers Flu-Prevention Tips for Kids

As parents and teachers know, children have a way of picking up colds and other illnesses at school. As the number of swine flu (H1N1 Flu Outbreak) cases increases in the U.S., it becomes even more important to teach kids how to stay healthy.

Teach Good Health Habits

Proper and consistent hand washing is one of the easiest ways to prevent the spread of flu. Teach kids by example by showing them proper hand washing technique:

- Wet hands with water and apply an amount of soap recommended by the manufacturer to hands.
- Rub hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and giving added attention to fingernails and surfaces where jewelry is worn.
- Rinse hands with water.
- Dry thoroughly with a disposable towel.
- Use towel to turn off faucet.

For younger children who may rush their hand washing, have them sing a short song such as "Row Row Row Your Boat," or the "Happy Birthday" song, which will ensure they wash for at least 20 seconds. Placing hand-washing reminders at children's eye level will also help them become consistent hand washers.

Teach kids to adopt these other healthy habits in order to prevent the spread of germs:

- Avoid sharing objects such as utensils, cups, and bottles.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands afterwards. If tissue-less, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper arm, not your hands.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to keep germs from entering your body.

Parents should also prepare for the potential spread of swine flu by talking with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick. Also ask your child's school or day care if there are plans to encourage sick children to stay home to reduce the spread of the disease.