

Dear School Administrators and Staff,

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention\ (CDC) has new guidance for schools and it differs from previous documents we received in the spring of 2009. The new guidance applies to any flu virus circulating during the 2009-2010 school year, not only 2009 H1N1 flu. This guidance recommends that, based on current flu conditions, students and staff with flu-like illness stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications. This is a shorter time period from the previous guidance of 7 days.

Schools are particularly being targeted for prevention measures as the largest number of cases has been in people between the ages of 5-24 years old.

Recommendations for preventing the spread of flu remain the following:

- **Practicing good hand hygiene.** Students and staff members should wash their hands often with soap and water especially after coughing or sneezing. Hands should be washed for at least 20 seconds. Alcohol based hand cleaners that are at least 60% alcohol, are also effective.
- **Practicing respiratory etiquette.** The main way that the flu spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, so it's important to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands.
- **Sick students and staff should be sent home immediately.** Persons displaying signs of influenza should be isolated from other students and staff and that is difficult given the school setting. That being said, the use of masks for the infected individual is recommended. Although the use of a mask for caregivers is of suspicious worth, that could be something to explore as the season progresses. Masks are available through our purchasing department.
- **Clean surfaces and items more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.** Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

Signs and symptoms of influenza include cough, fever, sore throat and body aches; in the case of H1N1, vomiting and diarrhea can also occur.

If you have questions regarding influenza or any other infectious disease, your school nurse is an excellent resource. Please report all suspected cases to her immediately so she can guide you through the process we have in place. I would also recommend that we remind people of the importance of confidentiality when it comes to health information. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
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