

Information for parents to clarify School response to Current Health Concerns:

I. School responses for the 2009-2010 school year

- **Stay home when sick:** Those with flu-like illness need to stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs
- **Separate ill students and staff:** Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness will be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home.
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:** The new recommendations emphasize the importance of the basic foundations of influenza prevention: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available). In particular, students should not share food, drinks, hygiene products like lip balm, gloves, pencils and pens, and hold hands etc.
- **Routine cleaning:** School staff will routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary.
- **Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths. People at high risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases.

CDC may recommend additional measures to help protect students and staff if global and national assessments indicate that influenza is causing more severe disease.

- **Active screening:** We will check students and staff for fever and other symptoms of flu when they get to school in the morning, separate those who are ill, and send them home as soon as possible. Throughout the day, staff will be vigilant in identifying students and other staff who appear ill.
- **High-risk students and staff members stay home:** People at high-risk of flu complications should talk to their doctor about staying home from school when a lot of flu is circulating in the community. The School will do its best to plan for ways to continue educating students who stay home.
- **Students with ill household members stay home:** Students who have an ill household member should stay home for five days from the day the first household member got sick. This is the time period they are most likely to get sick themselves.
- **Extend the period for ill persons to stay home:** If influenza severity increases, people with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 7 days, even if they have no more symptoms. If people are still sick, they should stay home until 24 hours after they have no symptoms.
- **School dismissals:** The School and health officials will work closely to balance the risks of flu in their community with the disruption that dismissals will cause in both education and the wider community. The length of time schools will be dismissed will vary depending on the severity and extent of illness. If dismissal is warranted it will typically be five to seven calendar days and we would reassess whether or not to resume classes after that period. If possible, the school will remain open to teachers and staff so they can continue to provide instruction through other means.

II. Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home:

- Be prepared to support home learning activities when the school makes them available..
- Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children dismissed from school. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.
- If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

- **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- **Check with your doctor about any special care** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.

- **Have the sick household member wear a facemask** – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
- **Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines** for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome
- **Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- **If your health department says that flu conditions have become more severe, extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.

If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.