

## **A Flu update from the New York State Department of Health**

According to NYSDOH, influenza activity has been geographically widespread in the State for ten consecutive weeks. Influenza viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughs and sneezes of infected people. Less often a person might get the flu by touching a surface or object that has influenza virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

Many respiratory infections spread from person to person and cause symptoms similar to those of influenza. Therefore, the information can also help reduce the spread of other viruses and bacteria that cause illness.

Early Identification is critical to controlling the spread of the flu. The symptoms of flu can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

Emergency Warning signs in children that indicate medical care is needed right away include:

- Fast breathing/trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with rash

Emergency warning signs in adults that indicate medical care is needed right away include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Sever persistent vomiting
- Flu like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Most people who get the flu will have mild illness, will not need medical care or antiviral drugs, and will recover in less than two weeks. Some people, however are more likely to get flu complications that can result in hospitalization and sometimes death and they are:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 and older
- Pregnant women and women up to two weeks postpartum
- Residents of nursing homes and other long term care facilities
- American Indians and Alaska Natives

People who have medical conditions including:

- Asthma
- Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, seizure disorders, stroke, intellectual disability, moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy or spinal cord injury.
- Chronic lung diseases
- Heart diseases
- Blood disorders
- Endocrine disorders
- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Metabolic disorders
- Weakened immune system due to disease or medication
- People younger than 19 years old who are receiving long term aspirin therapy
- People with extreme obesity

### **So what can you do to stop the spread of Influenza and other germs?**

**Get Vaccinated.** All persons aged six months and older are recommended to receive the flu vaccine each year unless they have a contraindication to flu vaccine.

**Wash your hands.** Students, parents, faculty and staff should practice proper hand washing to help reduce the spread of influenza germs and other germs. Hands should be washed before eating, after using the bathroom, before and after treating a wound, after blowing your nose or coughing/sneezing into your hands, after recess or physical education and after touching garbage. Hands should be washed with soap and water for 20 seconds, dried with a paper towel, which can also be used to turn off the faucet. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty an alcohol based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used.

**Proper respiratory etiquette** is another way students and staff can help stop the spread of influenza and other germs. Individuals should cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their bent arm. They should wash their hands immediately after using a tissue, coughing or sneezing into hands or blowing their nose.

### **Parent Guidelines for Students with Illness**

In an effort to help keep our school community healthy, the district wants to share some reminders.

1. Please do not send your child to school with a temperature of 100 degrees or above when taken orally, or 101 degrees or above when taken rectally.
2. Please do not send your child to school following an illness until he/she has been fever free for 24 hours WITHOUT taking Tylenol or Ibuprofen.
3. Please do not send your child to school if he/she has been vomiting or having diarrhea during the evening, night or early morning hours. Your child must not have had an episode of vomiting for 24 hours or diarrhea for 48 hours prior to return to school as viruses can still be present in the intestinal tract and still be passed to others as a result.

4. If your physician is considering a strep infection and a throat culture has been taken, please do not send your child to school until the results are known. If the results are positive, your child must receive at least 24 hours of the antibiotic before returning to school.
5. When your child has been diagnosed with an infection (e.g. pneumonia, bronchitis, strep) and your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, he/she must receive at least 24 hours of the antibiotic before returning to school.
6. If your child has red eyes and eye drainage in the morning or complains of one or both eyes itching and/or feeling sore, please keep him/her home and consult with your physician. If eye medication is prescribed, he/she must receive at least 24 hours of the medication before he/she returns to school.

**REMEMBER TO TEACH** your child that good hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of disease. Hand washing reduces the spread of disease both to and from the student.

**REMEMBER TO CALL** your child's school to report your child's absence each day that they are out of school with an illness.

With your help and cooperation we can make the school year a healthier one for your children. As always if you have any question, please feel free to contact your school nurse.