

January 23, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Please be aware that we have had reports of confirmed Influenza A cases these past few days in our school community.

Influenza symptoms include a sudden onset of high fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, and body aches. Influenza symptoms are similar to a common cold only more severe. Be sure to contact your physician if your child has a prolonged fever or respiratory illness. Influenza can cause pneumonia which requires medical care and follow-up.

Important steps in preventing influenza are:

- **have the influenza vaccine**
- **careful and frequent hand washing**
- **cover your cough**
- **keep your children home if they are ill**
- **avoid touching your face**

It is not too late to have a flu vaccine! If a child is running a temperature in the morning they need to stay home from school the following day. Students need to be fever free without the use of a fever reducing medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school. Influenza is most contagious during the time a child is running a fever. If a child receives Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Advil (ibuprofen) in the morning, it does not reduce the contagiousness of the illness. Students who are ill should stay home for their own health as well as for the health of others.

Thank you for your efforts to minimize the spread of influenza.

Mary Powers, R.N.

Kari Peterson, R.N.

If you have any questions, please call Mary Powers, R.N. at 934-4210 ext. 1009 or Kari Peterson at 507 934 2754, ext. 3054.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE THE INFLUENZA SCREENING TOOL](#)

Influenza Symptom Screening Tool for Parents and Caregivers

Use this questionnaire each day your child is sick with influenza-like symptoms and follow the instructions for when to keep the child home and what to tell the child's school.

Does your child have:

- Fever of 100° F or higher? Yes No
(Take the child's temperature before giving him/her fever-reducing medicine, like Tylenol.)
- Sore throat? Yes No
- Cough? Yes No

Should I keep my child home?

- If you checked "yes" for fever AND one of the other symptoms, keep your child home for at least 24 hours after his or her fever is gone without fever-reducing medicine. For many children this will be 5 to 7 days. Your child should feel well enough to participate in school before returning. If you have questions about your child's health or symptoms, call your child's doctor or clinic.
- If your child has been diagnosed by a doctor or clinic with a different disease, such as strep, follow your doctor or clinic's recommendation and school policy for when to return to school.

What should I tell my child's school?

- If you checked "yes" for fever AND one of the other symptoms, tell the school that your child is home with influenza-like illness.
- If your child has been diagnosed by a doctor or clinic with a different disease, such as strep, tell your child's school.

Vaccine-Preventable Disease Section
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5414
www.mdhflu.com

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.

Influenza (Flu) Information for Parents

What is influenza (flu)?

The flu is a respiratory disease caused by a virus that attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. Illness is usually mild or moderate, not requiring hospitalization. However, at times flu can be severe, even leading to death. It is not the same as the “stomach flu.”

What are the symptoms?

Flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, headache, extreme tiredness, and body aches. These symptoms usually begin suddenly and might be severe enough to stop your daily activities.

Should my child get a flu vaccination?

Yes. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get flu vaccine every year. Getting a flu vaccine helps protect your child from getting the flu and helps prevent them from passing it to people who can get very sick from flu – like babies, elderly people, and people who have chronic diseases.

Are children at high risk for complications of flu?

Sometimes healthy people, including children, can have serious complications or die from the flu. Children at risk for serious complications include:

- Children age 6 months to 5 years, but especially those under 2 years
- Children and teens 5-18 years with:
 - Heart disease
 - Asthma or other Pulmonary disease

- Metabolic disease (including diabetes)
- Immune deficiency
- Blood disorders
- Long-term aspirin therapy
- Teens who are pregnant during flu season

Should my child get one or two doses of flu vaccine?

It depends on your child’s age and whether they got flu vaccine in the past. If your child is 6 months through 8 years old, he or she may need two doses at least four weeks apart. Ask your doctor or clinic.

When should my family get vaccinated?

For best protection, flu vaccine is usually given in early fall before flu season starts. But you can get it anytime during flu season which is typically October through April.

How is flu different from a cold?

Colds are generally less serious than the flu. With a cold, you may have a runny or stuffy nose, while the flu causes body aches, fever, and extreme tiredness. A cold won’t usually keep kids from their normal activities, but kids with the flu will often feel too sick to play. Unlike colds, flu can cause serious health problems like pneumonia, bacterial infections, and hospitalization.

What type of flu vaccine should my child get?

There are several types of flu vaccine available. Your health care provider will know what type of vaccine is best for your child. The most important thing is to get them vaccinated.

Flu vaccine and allergies

Children with an egg allergy can safely get a flu vaccine. Life-threatening allergic reactions to flu vaccine are very rare. Talk to your health care provider if your child had a life-threatening reaction to a flu vaccine.

What if my child has the flu?

- Stay home if you or your child is sick.
- Rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Children may need fever reducing medications to keep their fever under control. Follow your doctor's instructions.
- Antibiotics will not help a person recover from the flu. Flu is caused by a virus not by bacteria.
- Take your child to the doctor or the emergency room if he or she:
 - Breathes rapidly or with difficulty
 - Has bluish skin color
 - Does not drink enough and becomes dehydrated
 - Does not wake up or interact with others
 - Is so irritable that he or she doesn't want to be held
 - Gets better only to become sick again, with fever and a more severe cough
- If you are concerned that something does not seem right with your child, call your doctor or clinic.

What can I do to protect myself and others?

- Get vaccinated.
- Avoid being around others who are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Protect infants by not exposing them to large crowds or sick family members when flu is in your community.
- Do not share drinking cups and straws.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door knobs, refrigerator handles, phones, water faucets).

What about antiviral medicines?

Antiviral medicines can offer some protection if you have been exposed to flu. Contact your health care provider right away if your child gets sick with the flu and is at high-risk for complications from flu.

Minnesota Department of Health
Immunization Program
PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5503 or 1-800-657-3970
www.mdhflu.com