



October 2019

Dear School Administrators, Staff, Parents and Guardians:

We want to inform your school community about **measles**, the **flu** (influenza) and **norovirus** to minimize illness and keep kids in class. Please review this letter to learn how to prevent getting sick, symptoms to look for, and how to avoid passing the illness to others. Contact your health care provider for more information on these illnesses.

Staff and students need to stay home from school and activities when they are sick to prevent passing the illness to others. School districts follow Washington County Public Health and Oregon Health Authority school exclusion guidelines, which state that a child with flu-like symptoms, vomiting or diarrhea should stay home from school until 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away.

MEASLES

In 2019, there were three outbreaks of measles in Oregon and over 1,200 cases so far across the U.S. Measles can be a serious illness and spreads very easily through the air.

Symptoms of measles include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Red, watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Red rash starts a few days into the illness and spreads from the head to the rest of the body

Prevention:

- The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is very effective at preventing measles. Please make sure you and your family are up to date on this important vaccine, especially if you are traveling outside the country.
- If you have questions about vaccines, please talk to your health care provider.
- You may also be interested in local community workshops: www.boostoregon.org/community-workshops.

FLU (INFLUENZA)

Influenza is a virus that spreads when someone with the illness coughs, sneezes or talks, and small droplets land in the nose or mouth of someone close by. Less often a person might get the flu by touching a surface that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

Symptoms of influenza usually start suddenly and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches and pains

The flu generally lasts 3-5 days, but it can last longer. Consult your health care provider for symptoms that are severe or do not get better.



Prevention:

The best ways to minimize spread of flu at school are to:

- **Get yourself and your child(ren) vaccinated if you have not yet had a flu shot this flu season.** Please contact your health care provider or go to flu.oregon.gov to find the nearest location that offers the flu vaccine.
- **Stay home/keep kids home if sick.**
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash hands often with soap and water.

NOROVIRUS

Norovirus is sometimes called the “stomach flu.” It is a virus that is easily passed person-to-person, by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, or from contaminated food or water.

Symptoms of norovirus usually start suddenly and include:

- Diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Fever, headache, body aches

You can feel very sick and throw up or have diarrhea many times a day. This usually lasts 1-2 days. Illness can cause dehydration, especially in young children. If they become dehydrated, children may cry with few or no tears, urinate less and be unusually sleepy or fussy. Consult your health care provider for symptoms that are severe or if you are worried about dehydration.

Prevention:

There is no vaccine for norovirus. These steps are important in minimizing spread of norovirus in schools:

- The single best way to prevent getting norovirus is to practice good **handwashing** with soap and water. It’s especially important to wash hands after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.
- **Stay home/keep kids home if sick.**

Please review your family’s immunization history to make sure you are all up to date. Vaccines are one of the best ways to protect your family from a variety of diseases. They also can decrease the spread of diseases in our schools.

We hope your school year is off to a healthy and happy start.

Sincerely,



Christina Baumann, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer
Washington County Public Health