

Student Health Services

This Fall Season, Let's Help Prevent the Spread of Flu and Other Infectious Illnesses!

The 2013-14 school year is already in full swing and with that comes the threat of the flu and other infectious illnesses. Unfortunately, schools can be a leading place for potential infectious outbreaks which is why prevention strategies in schools are so important. In addition, about 10-20% of the people in Georgia get influenza (the flu) each year. This means millions of Georgians may be infected by the flu this Fall and Winter.

What can you do to help prevent the spread of the flu and other infectious illnesses? **The first thing is simple....WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY!** Did you know according to the CDC, the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infectious illnesses is washing your hands? While most of us already know this, it is sometimes hard to remember this simple little important task during a busy day. Using hand sanitizer is also an option when soap and running water are not readily available. However, select a hand sanitizer that is alcohol based (and as with any soap, always supervise its use with small children). Recent research shows that frequent hand washing and regular use of hand sanitizers in school settings can reduce absenteeism by as much as 20% in students and staff, and increased attendance by students and staff translates to an improved academic performance!

You should clean your hands **BEFORE**:

- Eating or feeding someone else
- Drinking
- Treating a scrape, cut or open injury
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Giving medication



You should clean your hands **AFTER**:

- Going to the bathroom
- Handling uncooked food
- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Touching garbage
- Touching anything that might have germs
- Wiping your or someone's nose
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Playing with/touching and feeding pets
- Treating an injury like a cut, scrape or open sore
- Playing sports

Here are some additional things you can do to help prevent the spread of flu and other infectious illnesses:

- Teach children not to share personal items like drinks, food, eating utensils or other personal items like towels, combs, brushes, clothing items, and cosmetics
- Properly dispose of used tissues when coughing and sneezing, and use your elbow, arm or sleeve when coughing or sneezing instead of the hand
- Wash athletic practice clothing each day, and shower after any contact sports
- Stay home if you are sick, especially during the first days of illness when symptoms are more severe and the infection is most contagious. Return to work or school only after symptoms have improved and after you have had no fever for at least 24 hours
- Make sure your vaccinations are up-to-date
- Get vaccinated against the flu – flu vaccination is the best protection against the flu.
Student Health Services will be hosting staff flu clinics throughout the district from Oct – Dec 2013.

In Fulton County Schools, Student Health Services works in collaboration with the Clinic Assistants, School Administrators, and school staff to ensure the guidelines for identifying, reporting, managing and preventing suspected and/or confirmed infectious illnesses are followed. By working together, we can help reduce the transmission of the flu and other infectious illnesses in the schools and community. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Health Services at (404) 305-2177.

Submitted by: Lynne P. Meadows, RN, MS Coordinator, Student Health Services