



DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.



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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Influenza (aka the Flu) has come early in Marin, California and throughout the country. Influenza is a viral infection that affects your respiratory system and although the majority of people recover, some can become very ill and in rare cases it can lead to death. We are expected to have a severe flu season.

The flu is often confused with other viruses such as the common cold or the norovirus (also called the "stomach" flu) which causes nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Initially, the flu may seem like a common cold with a runny nose, fever and sore throat, whereas flu tends to come on more suddenly and symptoms are much worse.

Symptoms of the flu include fever over 100.4 F, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue.

Please consider the following actions to keep your family and school community healthy:

- **Stay home** when you are sick, and keep your children home when they are sick. A person can spread the illness as long as 1 day before through 7 days after symptoms start. We recommend that a child with the flu does not return to school until they have not had a fever for 24 hours without the use of medication that treats fever, such as Tylenol or Motrin. If a person is in contact with a person sick with the flu, it usually takes 1 to 4 days for symptoms to start.
- **Wash your hands often** and thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your cough** using your elbow, and cover your sneezes with a tissue.
- **Avoid** touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Frequently clean** commonly touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs and cell phones.
- **Get vaccinated annually. It is not too late to get the flu vaccine.** Even if it is not 100% effective, it can help reduce the severity of symptoms, hospitalizations and deaths related to the flu. Also, flu strains change through the season so the vaccine may prove more effective in some cases than in others. As a reminder, children younger than 9 years getting the flu vaccine

for the first time must have 2 doses at least 4 weeks apart. Contact your regular doctor's office to get a flu shot. The vaccine is also available at many retail pharmacies.

Although the flu is generally not harmful to generally healthy individuals, it can be a severe illness for children younger than 5 years old, pregnant women, adults age 65 years and older, and people with chronic health conditions or immune system problems that make it difficult to fight off infection. For these individuals, or anyone who is severely ill, we recommend contacting your medical provider for advice on antiviral flu medications.

For more information about the flu, please visit [marinflu.org](http://marinflu.org). To find a flu vaccine at a location near you, visit [vaccinefinder.org](http://vaccinefinder.org). Thank you for taking action to keep your family and community healthy this winter.

Sincerely,



Lisa Santora, MD, MPH  
Deputy Public Health Officer