From the Health Office

Healthy Habits & Cold/Flu Season Guidance

As autumn arrives and cooler weather sets in, cold and flu season is officially upon us. Staying healthy and preventing the spread of illness in our schools takes a partnership between school staff, students, and families.

Our Health Services team is committed to keeping our school environments safe, clean, and healthy. Below are essential hygiene guidelines and official recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help protect our students and community.

Everyday Basic Hygiene Habits for Students



Building consistent daily hygiene habits is one of the most effective ways to prevent contagious illnesses from spreading in classrooms and at home:

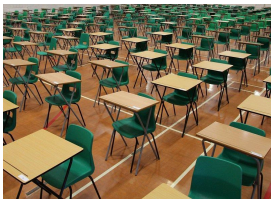
- **Handwashing Routine:** Encourage your child to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least **20 seconds**, especially before eating, after using the restroom, after outdoor recess, and after blowing their nose or coughing.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** When soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol is a helpful alternative.
- **Cover Coughs and Sneezes:** Teach children to cough or sneeze into their elbow or into a tissue rather than their hands. Throw used tissues directly into the trash and wash hands immediately afterward.
- **Avoid Touching the Face:** Remind children to keep hands away from their eyes, nose, and mouth to avoid introducing germs into the body.
- **Avoid Sharing Personal Items:** Discourage sharing water bottles, utensils, lip balm, or food at school.

Knowing When to Keep Your Child Home

To help protect classmates and school staff, please keep your student home when they show signs of an infectious illness. According to guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and ISD 728 Health Services, students should stay home under the following conditions:

- **Fever**: A temperature of 100.4°F or higher. Students must remain home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, such as Tylenol or Motrin.
- **Vomiting**: More than two episodes of vomiting within the preceding 24 hours. Students should remain home until they are able to participate in school comfortably and meet applicable return-to-school guidance.
- **Diarrhea**: Frequent loose stools, especially if bloody or causing accidents. Students should remain home until symptoms improve and they can comfortably participate in the school day.
- **Respiratory Illness Symptoms**: A new or worsening cough, sore throat, or nasal congestion accompanied by fever or feeling unwell. Keep your student home until their overall symptoms improve and they have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- **Undiagnosed Rashes:** Students with an unexplained rash may need evaluation by a healthcare provider before returning to school, depending on the rash and associated symptoms.

If your student develops symptoms during the school day, Health Services may contact you to arrange for them to be picked up. Thank you for helping us maintain a healthy school environment for all students and staff.



When Illness Occurs in Classrooms

In accordance with MDH guidelines, district Licensed School Nurses monitor illness trends (such as Influenza-Like Illness and Gastrointestinal Symptoms) across buildings. Notifications may be shared with families if significant illness trends are observed or when specific public health thresholds are met.

MDH & CDC Core Prevention Strategies

The CDC and MDH recommend a layered approach to preventing respiratory viruses such as Influenza (flu), RSV, and COVID-19:

- **Vaccinations:** Flu shots and updated vaccines remain a primary line of defense against severe illness. Consult your healthcare provider or local public health clinic for immunization opportunities.
- **Clean and Disinfected Spaces:** Our custodial and health services staff clean high-touch surfaces daily across all district buildings to maintain a clean learning environment.
- **Ventilation:** Maintaining good indoor air quality and ventilation in classrooms helps reduce airborne germs.

Contact & Health Resources

If you have questions about whether your child is well enough to attend school or if you need to report a student illness, please contact your school's Health Office or reach out to:

- **Email:** health.services@isd728.org
- **District Health Forms & Information:** www.isd728.org/services/health-services

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in keeping our schools healthy, safe, and ready for learning!