Darien Public Schools

Department of Health Services

November 6, 2026

Dear Families,

With flu season underway, we are seeing an increase in respiratory illness in our schools. This letter shares important information about influenza (flu) and other common respiratory viruses, including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19, to help you make the best health decisions for your family.

Influenza (Flu)

Flu symptoms usually come on suddenly and may include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, sore throat, dry cough, and nasal congestion. Although these symptoms are similar to those of a common cold, children with the flu usually have a higher fever and feel sicker. If your child has flu symptoms, please contact their pediatrician. Testing is recommended because antiviral medications are effective, readily available, and work best when started early. A negative flu test does not rule out other respiratory illnesses, such as those described below.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms such as fever, congestion, cough, and sneezing. Symptoms can be more severe in young children and older adults, and children with RSV can become sick very quickly. If your child's symptoms worsen rapidly or you notice any change in their breathing, call your pediatrician right away or go directly to the emergency room. Routine testing is often not recommended because symptoms are generally mild and antiviral treatment is not readily available in community settings.

COVID-19

COVID-19 symptoms may include fever, cough, headache, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, and a new loss of taste or smell. Testing is recommended only if the person with symptoms is at higher risk of serious illness or lives with someone who is. For these individuals, testing at home when symptoms appear can help them get antiviral treatment, if eligible, and take steps to protect others at high risk of complications.

Keeping Our School Community Healthy

To promote the health and safety of our school community, we continue to recommend that families:

- Talk with your health care provider about the flu vaccine and the current COVID-19 vaccine.
- Keep your child home when they are sick. Your child may return to school once they have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, their symptoms are improving, and they feel well enough to participate in the school day. Please note: if a fever is detected at school, plan for your child to stay home the following day.
- Encourage frequent handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes.

To learn more about respiratory illness, including signs and symptoms, treatment options, and current case rates in Connecticut, visit the Connecticut respiratory illness data dashboard.

As always, please consult your health care provider whenever you have concerns about your child's health.

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