

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As the new school year begins, please take some time to consider preparing for potential illnesses your child or family may encounter. It is important for you to pay attention to messages from schools, local public health agency officials, state health officials, or your private health care provider, regarding illness in our communities.

Flu spreads easily. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is important that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Make sure your family gets their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as it becomes available.
- Help your children to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of both seasonal influenza and Novel H1N1 influenza in schools at this time.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy.