



October 1, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in District 113A. We want to keep our schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. ***But, we need your help to do this.***

We are working closely with the Cook County Department of Public Health to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available. It is important to note that the Cook County Department of Public Health has informed schools that most doctors will not be testing patients for H1N1 during this flu season. Therefore, we will conduct school absence monitoring based on Influenza-Like Illness (i.e., fever >100.0 F, cough and sore throat; runny/stuffed nose, vomiting and diarrhea may also be considered).

If the flu becomes more severe, we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school;
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing field trips; and/or
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they are sick.

For now, we are doing everything we can to keep our schools functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help:

- ***Teach your children to wash their hands*** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- ***Teach your children not to share personal items*** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable is also helpful.
- ***Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.*** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- ***Keep sick children at home*** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- ***Do not send children to school if they are sick.*** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home.*

For more information, visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. Detailed prevention steps for parents from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are also included on the reverse side of this letter. Information from public health agencies as well as updates about our district's procedures will be posted on our website: www.sd113a.org. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Kathy DeMari
Kathy DeMari, R.N.
Central School

Jeanne Duffy
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Old Quarry School

Debbie Dvorak
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Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
2. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, parents should consider the following steps:

- ▶ **Extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
- ▶ **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days** from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- ▶ Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- ▶ Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
- ▶ Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- ▶ Update emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.
- ▶ Talk to your school administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

For more information:

Visit: www.flu.gov

Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day

1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: (888) 232-6348

cdcinfo@cdc.gov

