

FLU RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Influenza is an acute, highly contagious respiratory disease. It is characterized by sudden onset of fever, body aches, sore throat, headache, and cough, and, in children, can also cause diarrhea, vomiting and dehydration.

- Staff and students (especially those with medical conditions and anyone else who wants to lower their risk of getting the flu) should get the flu shot. Remember, it is never too late in the flu season to be vaccinated. Antibody production usually takes about two weeks after vaccination.
- Any employee, student, teacher, staff, or volunteer suspected of having the flu should not attend school.
- Wash hands several times a day using soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds (generally the amount of time it takes to sing the ABC's). Dry hands with paper towels or automatic hand dryers, if possible. In school, allow regular breaks for the students and teachers to wash hands. Young children should be instructed and assisted to ensure proper hand washing. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and paper towels are always available.
- The flu can be spread from coughs or sneezes. Make sure tissues are available in all classrooms. Students and staff should cover their mouths when coughing and use a tissue when sneezing or blowing their noses. Tissues should be thrown away immediately following proper hand washing (alcohol hand gels may be used in the classrooms to minimize disruption).
- Closure of individual schools in the event of an outbreak has not proven to be an effective way of stopping the flu, but that decision should be made by the appropriate school officials based on other considerations.
- Schools should be extra-vigilant that ill students be excluded from sports activities, choir, or any activities that may involve close contact, since transmission of the flu may be easier in these situations. All students and staff should avoid sharing of saliva, i.e., sharing glasses, water bottles, other drinks, spoons/forks, or kissing, etc.
- School buses, because of the enclosed space, may allow for easy spread of the flu. Tissues should be available on the buses, and students should be encouraged to cover nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing. Disinfect commonly handled interior surfaces (i.e., door handles, hand rails, etc.) between loads of students, if possible.

In the school, clean commonly used surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, eating surfaces, desks, etc., frequently with disinfectant. (Bleach solutions or commercial disinfectants are appropriate.)