

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are at the time of year when we see influenza (flu) and other respiratory viruses at school. We want to let you know what steps we are taking to keep our school community healthy and how you can help.

Respiratory infections, such as the flu and common colds (colds), are spread when people come in close contact with sick people and inhale airborne droplets or come in contact with contaminated surfaces. Flu and colds symptoms can sometimes be difficult to tell them apart, but consider this:

	<b>FLU</b>	<b>COMMON COLD</b>
<b>How it begins</b>	Sudden	Gradual
<b>Cough</b>	Severe	Mild to moderate
<b>Muscles</b>	Achy	None to mild aches
<b>Stuffy, runny nose</b>	Sometimes	Common
<b>Tiredness</b>	Severe	Mild
<b>Fever</b>	None to high grade	None to low grade
<b>Complications</b>	Bronchitis/Pneumonia	Earache/Sinus infection

If symptoms persist or worsen, make an appointment with your healthcare provider to be evaluated. The flu can be serious for children of all ages, causing them to miss school, activities, or even be hospitalized.

We take the health of our students seriously and work very hard to keep these viruses from spreading. We regularly clean frequently touched areas such as door knobs, stair rails, telephones, computer keyboards, and bathroom faucets and fixtures. We also instruct students and staff to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **Take 3** approach to fight the flu:

- 1. Get the flu vaccine every year**
- 2. Take everyday preventative actions to stop the spread of germs:**
  - Wash hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available,
  - Cover coughs with a disposable tissue or cough into their sleeve,
  - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth,
  - Avoid close contact with sick individuals,
  - Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils, and
  - Stay home when sick.
- 3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your healthcare provider prescribes them**

You can help us maintain a healthy school environment in a variety of ways:

- Make sure your children receive all recommended immunizations, including an annual flu vaccine,
- Reinforce all of the above preventive behaviors practiced at school,
- Make sure children get plenty of exercise, sleep, and healthy food, and
- **Keep sick children home, especially if they have a fever above 100° F, diarrhea, vomiting, or a severe cough.**

A couple additional important points:

- Notify your child's healthcare provider if your child develops difficulty breathing or a new onset of wheezing, and
- If your child has asthma, please make sure we have a copy of your child's Asthma Action Plan.

Important information about preventing the flu can be found at these websites:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm> and 2
- [www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/school](http://www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/school).
- Find a place near you to get the flu and other vaccines at [http://vaccine.healthmap.org/.](http://vaccine.healthmap.org/)}

If you have any questions, please contact the school nurse Anne Hanigan, at (208) 642-3379. Together we can have a healthy school year!