

Dear Parents,

During this school year, more people than usual in our schools and communities are likely to be getting sick with the influenza. In addition to the regular “seasonal” flu that usually starts in late fall, we are continue to see cases of the H1N1 influenza that began last spring and now may increase with school in session.

Right now, H1N1 still seems to cause mild to moderate illness in most people but some people have been hospitalized and in Minnesota (MN) there has been 3 deaths. Most people who had H1N1 in MN have been school-aged children.

Influenza spreads when a person with flu coughs or sneezes. Symptoms are fever along with cough and sore throat. Some also experience headache or nausea and vomiting.

In order to reduce the spread of H1N1 and seasonal flu there are **4 important actions** we can all take:

- **Wash your hands frequently**, especially after coughing/sneezing, shaking hands, and before eating. Hand gels with alcohol can be used if soap and water are not available and the hands have no visible dirt on them.
- **Cover your cough and sneezing** with a tissue. Throw the tissue away and wash your hands. If no tissue is available then cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve as you cough or sneeze.
- **Stay home from work or school if you are ill with flu symptoms** (fever and cough and/or sore throat). Remain at home until 24 hours after your fever is gone without fever reducing medicine.
- **Get your flu shots.** Seasonal flu vaccinations are now available. Health people can be carriers of the flu virus without being ill. The H1N1 influenza vaccine will be offered at school clinics later this fall when it becomes available. Consent forms will be sent home or will be available online prior to the school clinic.

Please plan now for who will care for your children should they become ill. Daycares and schools will be monitoring children for illness and sending them home at the first signs of fever or illness. Remember they need to **stay home when they are ill**, this maybe difficult for teenagers as they want to be with friends and not miss their activities. *As parent you will need to be firm on this issue.*

If your child becomes severely ill with the flu, contact your medical provider, but take steps to avoid exposing others to the flu.

- Call first to see if you need to actually see your provider.
- If you do need to see your provider, they will let you know which entrance to use.

For more information or to stay current with the flu situation you may visit these websites:

www.countrysidepublichealth.org

www.health.state.mn.us Click on H1N1 Novel Influenza Information

www.flu.gov

or you may contact your local Countryside Public Health Office at 320-598-7313

Thank you for your assistance in helping to reduce the spread of influenza in our school. We look forward to a productive school year.

Sincerely,