



DALLAS COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Director

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Medical Director/ Health Authority

Date: 10/2/2009

To: All School Staff and Parents of Students

Re: Increasing Influenza Activity in Dallas County

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Influenza season has begun earlier than usual this fall in Dallas County. Cases of influenza are on the rise and expected to increase as we move into the influenza, or "flu" season. As expected with influenza increasingly circulating in our community, cases of influenza-like illnesses may be increasingly reported in students and staff.

As in past influenza seasons, the health and safety of all children are a priority for each school community. Since flu can spread easily from person to person, we need your help to prevent cases of flu in students and staff. It is important for all staff, students, and families to take the following precautions at this time:

- Monitor the health of your child and all other household members closely by **checking for fever and other flu symptoms every morning**. Symptoms of flu usually include fever with cough or sore throat, and sometimes runny nose, body aches, headache, vomiting or diarrhea.
- **Staff and children with symptoms of the flu should stay at home**. Keeping sick students at home is the best way to keep flu from spreading to other students and staff. As much as possible, sick children should be cared for by a single designated caregiver, kept in a separate room in the house and have limited contact with other household members who are not sick. **Children with symptoms of flu should not return to school until they no longer have fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. A doctor's note is NOT required in order for your child to return to school.** Please notify the school if your child is absent by 10 am on the day of absence.
- **Testing for flu and treatment with antiviral medications is NOT needed for most children** over 5 years of age without underlying medical conditions who have mild flu illness. Ill children should be encouraged to drink plenty of clear fluids to keep from becoming dehydrated. Do not give any medicines containing aspirin to your child. *Contact a healthcare provider and seek medical care immediately if your child is having difficulty breathing or chest pain, has altered mental status or confusion, is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down, or is getting worse.*
- **Recognize whether your child or any household member is at high risk for severe illness from flu.** *People at higher risk for flu complications include children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, cancer or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.* If any **high risk** person or their household members become sick with flu-like symptoms, please contact your doctor as soon as possible to ask for advice about antiviral medications.
- **Remind all household members to wash their hands** thoroughly with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer regularly. Continue to teach children to cover their cough with their elbow or sleeve, and to avoid touching their face.
- **Have all eligible household members vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu as soon as possible.

Parents should plan now for the care of their children during school hours, should it become necessary to close a school due to H1N1 influenza. At this time, parents should not take well children without underlying medical conditions out of school. Influenza epidemics evolve in unpredictable ways. Schools are currently closely following their percentages of absenteeism. It is not necessary or recommended to count numbers of persons with positive flu tests in a school. Be aware that if the situation becomes more severe, the school will notify you if there are any additional steps that the school will be taking to prevent the spread of flu.

More information on how to take care of a sick child is available at: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm). For more information about flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov). Dallas County influenza resources and updates are available at: [www.dallascounty.org](http://www.dallascounty.org). Thank you.