



August 11, 2009

Dear Families

This letter will provide you with information regarding school practices related to Seasonal Flu and H1N1 Flu. The typical seasonal flu causes illness in late fall to early spring. This year, public health officials continue to be concerned about the new H1N1 flu which has caused illness worldwide and can cause severe illness in some individuals, especially children.

The Jefferson County Public Health Department and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have advised these guidelines for parents and families regarding the H1N1 flu:

1. Stay Informed

Because the new H1N1 flu virus is changeable and unpredictable, all community members are encouraged to consistently review local and national public health information and changing guidelines:

- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- Parents with additional questions regarding H1N1 flu can call the Colorado Help Line at 1-877-462-2911. Questions are being answered in both English and Spanish.

2. Special Populations

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized special populations who may be at more risk for severe illness:

- Health Care Workers
- Pregnant Women
- Care providers of children younger than 6 months
- **Children and individuals aged 6 months – 24 years**
- Individuals with certain chronic health conditions

3. Guidelines on When Students Should Remain Home from School

The Jefferson County Health Department advises that students should remain home from school when these symptoms are present:

- Flu- like symptoms: Fever (greater than 100° F) or Chills AND Respiratory symptoms, especially cough or sore throat
- The Center for Disease Control advises that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications (Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, etc.)
- Gastrointestinal Symptoms
 - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea—students should remain home for at least 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.
- When the student does not feel well enough to actively participate and engage in the regular school day.

4. Special Planning During this Flu Season:

- Students who have a flu-like illness need to stay home under the care of their parent or an adult.
- As advised by Jefferson County Public Health Department, students who arrive at school with symptoms of flu-like illness will be dismissed to return home.
- Parents will want to plan for additional time away from work or routine activities which may be necessary in order to care for children with flu-like illness.
- Parents will want to meet with their child's health care provider soon to discuss their student's unique health needs during this flu season, including the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine.
- Pregnant women, parents/care givers for young children and individuals with chronic illness will want to meet with their health care provider and discuss planning for this flu season including seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 flu vaccine.

5. Seasonal Flu and H1N1 Flu Vaccines

- As with the seasonal flu vaccine, the H1N1 vaccine will be a voluntary choice.
- As with all vaccines, children will receive the H1N1 vaccine only upon the consent of a parent. Parents have the choice to exempt children from vaccinations based upon personal, religious or medical reasons.

6. Talking to Children: Focus on what your child *can do* to avoid getting H1N1 flu:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue. (If a tissue is used, throw the tissue away immediately). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people who are sick.
- Stay home from school when you have flu-like illness. Stay home **until at least 24 hours after the fever subsides. The absence of fever must be without taking fever-reducing medication such as Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen.** (Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)