

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT Fall 2009

Flu Reporting Guidance for Parents of School Students

If your child is sick with Flu, **please** report it to your school! We would like to be able to keep our school open; therefore, for an ill child's care and for the protection of the other students, the school is monitoring flu cases.

What To Say

If your son or daughter is sick with influenza, it is important that you report the symptoms when you speak with your school's secretary. Please don't tell the secretary only that your child will be absent from school. Instead please say, "My child is sick with symptoms of influenza."

When To Say It

You need not wait for a doctor's diagnosis to know your child has influenza. You should report that your child is sick with influenza symptoms if they have a cough or a sore throat and if, when you take their body temperature using a thermometer, the reading measures 100 degrees or greater. Additional symptoms that often indicate influenza include; listlessness, muscle aches, runny nose, sore throat, chills, and headache. If your child has these symptoms, please don't send them to school. Call your school and say, "My child is sick with influenza symptoms." If seen by your doctor and diagnosed, please say, "My child has been seen by a doctor and diagnosed with Influenza."

Why It Matters

If you report influenza as the reason for your child's absence, your school can share that valuable information with Three Rivers District Health Department. Understand your child's name, grade, classroom is not given out. We've asked school nurses to report school absenteeism numbers due to influenza in order to gain a clearer view of how influenza is emerging. This can help us take action to slow the spread of influenza in our region. We take influenza seriously - and you should, too - because it can lead to serious illnesses, school and business closures, and even deaths. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that, in the U.S., influenza causes more than 200,000 hospitalizations annually and about 36,000 deaths.

Next Steps

Once you report influenza to your school secretary, consider making an appointment with your child's pediatrician to verify the presence of influenza and obtain a prescription for helpful medications. Please do not send your child back to school until your child's fever is normal for at least 24 hours without using any medications to relieve the fever. If your child is taking medication for influenza, it is still okay to send them to school once the fever is gone for 24 hours, and if they feel well enough. However, your physician knows your child, and may caution you to keep your child out longer.

Keep in mind

Your child's school is working closely with Three Rivers District Health Department on this problem. If the Influenza becomes more severe Three Rivers District Health Department will be giving us further information and guidance. This guidance may change and you may be asked to keep your child out longer, or keep siblings that do not appear ill, out as well. All will be done to protect the welfare of your child.