
EPPING SCHOOL DISTRICT

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November 2, 2009

Dear Parents and School Staff,

This letter is to update you on the flu situation in New Hampshire and in our school system.

The NH Department of Health and Human Services is reporting 5% of the population has flu-like symptoms. It is anticipated that it will rise to 14% following the trend seen in southern states. It is also important to note that most cases of flu-like illnesses are now due to H1N1 virus. It is also not known whether the usual “seasonal” flu will arrive later in the fall or winter.

This morning the elementary school reported that student absenteeism was beginning to significantly rise. Parents throughout the school district have reported various illnesses including the flu, strep throat, stomach virus, and colds. Last week other school districts reported record student absenteeism. In their case most students were sick for 3 to 5 days. Schools reached peak illness after 5 days and returned to normal after an additional 5 days.

Our goal continues to be to keep schools open and operate as usual. You can help us do that by following these recommended interventions.

- Tell your school attendance and health staff about your child’s symptoms so they can watch for other students with the same symptoms.
- Wash your hands well and often using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Make sure your children do the same.
- If you can’t wash with soap and water, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Remind children to keep their hands away from their face – don’t touch mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Cover your cough. Teach your children to do the same. Cough into the inside of your elbow or into a tissue – not your hands.
- Throw away used tissues or hand sanitizer wipes. Teach your children to throw away tissues and then wash hands.
- Don’t share water bottles, utensils, cups, food, etc. with others.
- You can disinfect hard surfaces in your home with a solution made of one ounce bleach to one gallon of water.

Most importantly if you or your child is sick, stay home from work or school until you are better. Please contact your medical provider for guidance. Keep sick people away from people who are

not sick.

The NH Department of Health and Human Services has also set up a special flu hotline. Just call 2-1-1 to talk to someone. There is also a lot of reliable information on the CDC and NH DHHS websites: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu and www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/swineflu.htm. Fact sheets and website links are also available on the district website at www.sau14.org.

Sick students will not be penalized for staying home. All students will have ample opportunity to make up missed work. We ask that parents contact their children's schools to let us know that they are out because of illness and to report whether they have flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, body aches, sometimes vomiting and diarrhea).

This morning Governor Lynch and representatives from Homeland Security, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Education held a conference call to update school districts. Most of the questions concerned the availability of vaccine. Medical responders are the first in line to receive vaccination and that has begun. School nurses are scheduled to receive vaccine by early next week.

Individuals designated high risk are the next in line. If you or your child is considered a high risk as shown below, please contact your health care provider to discuss your situation and the availability of flu vaccine.

1. Pregnant women
2. People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
3. Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
4. Persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old
5. People ages 25 through 64 years of age with chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems. This includes pregnancy; cancer; blood disorders including sickle cell disease; chronic lung disease including asthma or obstructive pulmonary disease; diabetes; heart disease; kidney disorders; liver disorders; neurological disorders including nervous system, brain or spinal cord; neuromuscular disorders including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis; and people with weakened immune systems including people with AIDS or those who are receiving chemotherapy.

It will be several more weeks before vaccine will be available for healthy children. The state has decided not to have vaccine clinics in schools due to unfair distribution encountered in other states. However, community clinics are being organized.

We will continue to keep you informed as information is provided. Thank you for working with us to keep everyone in our schools as healthy as possible during this flu season.

Sincerely,

Barbara D. Munsey
Superintendent of Schools