

# SURRY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## The Flu: A Guide for Parent

**Influenza (the flu)** is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses.

### **Dear Parent or Guardian:**

The peak of the cold and flu season is upon us. To prevent widespread flu in the schools, we recommend that your child stay home from school if experiencing flu or cold symptoms.

### **FLU INFORMATION**

#### **How serious is the flu?**

Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. While the flu can be serious even in people who are otherwise healthy, it can be especially dangerous for young children and children of any age who have certain long-term health conditions.

#### **How does the flu spread?**

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby.

#### **How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?**

People with the flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. However, children and people with weakened immune systems can infect others for longer periods of time, especially if they still have symptoms.

### **IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK—to decide whether or not to send your child to school please consider the following guidelines:**

#### **Consider keeping your child home for an day of rest and observation if he or she has any of the following symptoms:**

- Very stuffy or runny nose and cough
- Mild sore throat (no fever, no known exposure to Strep)
- Headache
- Mild stomach ache

#### **Definitely keep your child at home for treatment and observation if he or she has any of the following symptoms:**

- Fever (greater than 100 degrees by mouth and your child may return to school only after his or her temperature has been consistently below 100-degrees, by mouth, for at least 24 hours ) *Some people won't have a fever with the flu at onset. (The fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines like Tylenol, Advil...)*
- Vomiting (even if only once)
- Diarrhea (more common in children than adults)
- Chills
- General Malaise or feelings of fatigue, tiredness, weakness or muscle aches
- Frequent congested (wet) or croupy cough
- Lots of nasal congestion with frequent blowing of nose

#### **Can my child go to school if he or she is sick?**

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children.

#### **When can my child go back to school after having the flu?**

Keep your child home from school for at **least 24 hours** after their fever is gone. A fever is 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.

## **PROTECT YOUR CHILD**

### **What can I do if my child gets sick?**

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child is 5 years and older and does not have other health problems and gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed.

Children younger than 5 years of age – especially those younger than 2 years old-children with certain chronic conditions, making them a **HIGH RISK** for flu complications, call or take them to their doctor right away if they develop flu symptoms.

### **Is there medication to treat the flu?**

Antiviral drugs, such as TAMIFLU, are prescription medicines that can be used to treat influenza illness. They can make people feel better and get better sooner. Antivirals can mean the difference between having milder illness instead of very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay. They work best when started during the first 2 days of illness.

### **What are some of the other ways I can protect my child against the flu?**

In addition to getting vaccinated, you and your children can take everyday steps to help prevent the spread of germs:

- ▶ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- ▶ If your child is sick with flu illness, try to keep him or her in a separate room from others in the household, if possible.
- ▶ CDC recommends that your sick child stay home for at least 24 hours after his or her fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- ▶ Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash and then wash hands
- ▶ Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect hard surfaces and objects that may be contaminated, including bathroom surfaces, kitchen counters and toys for children. Wipe them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

### **What if my child seems very sick?**

Even previously healthy children can get very sick from the flu.

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child gets Flu Symptoms, call your doctor.

- ▶ Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- ▶ Bluish or gray skin color
- ▶ Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or not making as much urine as they normally do)
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Not waking up or not interacting
- ▶ Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- ▶ Flu symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough

A child who has a fever should remain at home until “Fever Free” for a minimum of 24 hours. A Child who has started antibiotics needs to be on the medication for 48 hours before being considered non-contagious and able to return to school. Often when a child awakens with vague complaints (the way colds/flu begin) it is better to observe your child at home for an hour or two before deciding whether or not to bring to school. **Your child should be physically able to participate in all school activities when they return to school.**

Thank you in advance for helping make the rest of the flu and cold season as healthy as possible.

Sincerely,

*Regina Edwards Rn*

R. Edwards RN (School Nurse)

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