

Subject: Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

Date: September 29, 2009

Several weeks ago, I communicated with you regarding the seasonal and H1N1 flu. As I mentioned in my last e-mail, I firmly believe that the best way the school system can provide assistance is to pass on accurate information on how we can slow down the spread of the flu in our school community. With this in mind, we would like to share the following information with you:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
2. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu. Carroll County Public Schools is working with the Carroll County Health Department to bring the vaccination program to our schools. You will receive separate communication regarding this program at a later date.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, parents should consider the following CDC recommendations:

1. **Extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
2. **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days** from the time the

household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

The CDC also recommends these steps to help you prepare for the flu this school year:

1. Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
2. Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
3. Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
4. Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
5. Update emergency contact lists.

Cleaning at School:

Carroll County Public Schools uses hospital grade disinfecting cleaning products that are Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved for use around children. All cleaning materials used at school have a Material Safety Data Sheet on file which lists all chemical ingredients of the product.

In the past weeks, we had several incidents where parents and staff members brought bleach-based cleaning products to school and used them to clean desks, doorknobs, walls and other hard surfaces.

Please be aware that these bleach-based products are **not approved products and should not be used at school.** These products may cause a negative reaction in children. In addition, there is a danger of an adverse chemical reaction when bleach-based products are combined with the cleaning products in use in our schools.

Further, the CDC advises that our normal process of cleaning schools is effective in combating both the seasonal and H1N1 flu. Please do not bring cleaning products into our schools or send cleaning products with your child.

The steps outlined above are the most effective method of reducing transmission of viruses associated with the flu.

If you would like additional information about H1N1, please visit the CCPS website at www.carrollk12.org or <http://www.marylandfluwatch.org/>

Thank you for your help regarding this important matter. By working together, we can create a healthier Carroll County for everyone.

Sincerely,

Chuck Ecker

Superintendent of Schools