

H1N1 Flu Update

November 12, 2009

Dear Parent,

These H1N1 updates and our H1N1 website focus on the school system's efforts to prepare for the flu season and provide you with tips to help prevent the spread of flu. This update will review the flu vaccine programs in our schools and community and discuss student attendance in our schools. The following is a summary of these efforts.

Vaccine Program

In cooperation with the Carroll County Health Department, we helped administer over 7,000 doses of seasonal flu vaccine to elementary students. Also, as of November 12, we have vaccinated over 4,000 students in 17 elementary schools with H1N1 FluMist vaccine. As the health department receives additional supplies of FluMist vaccine, we will continue to vaccinate students in the remaining elementary schools. In addition, those students requiring a second dose of FluMist for both the seasonal and H1N1 flu are scheduled to receive their vaccine in January or after the prescribed time line between doses is reached and the vaccine is received.

As I discussed in a previous e-mail, due to insufficient county resources, the Carroll County Health Department must offer the H1N1 vaccine to middle and high school students through community clinics. The scheduling of these clinics is driven by the receipt of the vaccine. As we receive information on the dates and times for community flu clinics, we will pass the information on to you.

Attendance

In response to your requests, we have been posting daily attendance data on our website for schools with over 10% absenteeism. I am pleased to report that over the past few weeks we saw a decrease in the number of absences, and

attendance rates have returned to previous levels. In fact, our 10% list has been reduced to just a couple of schools. While we will continue to monitor attendance on a daily basis, we will discontinue posting the list. In its place, we will post a system-wide attendance chart showing October and partial November attendance percentages. You can see by the chart how our attendance was affected by illness in our schools and that we have returned to our normal attendance percentages. The attendance chart will be updated each week. The chart is posted on our website at www.carrollk12.org/admin/commedia/h1n1.asp or you can look for the H1N1 logo on our homepage. Be assured that if we begin to see another increase in absences, we will post the attendance data on our website.

Ongoing Efforts

It is important that we do not let down our guard. Media reports still provide conflicting information about the path of the H1N1 virus. Some reports indicate the worst is behind us, while others predict future outbreaks. It is hard for the average citizen to know what to believe. Working together as a community and openly communicating our efforts is our best course of action.

Thanks for your help thus far. I appreciate that you are keeping sick children home and taking other precautions for preventing the spread of illness. Thanks also for your positive comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank the staff at the Carroll County Health Department for their help and guidance as we work through this flu season.

Prevention Tips

Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.

Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.

Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

Don't send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are sick at school may be sent home. Having children stay home when sick allows them to rest and helps you to monitor their health closely. Keeping your sick child home protects fellow students and school staff.

For more information on the flu, visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO. You may also visit the Carroll County Health Department's website at <http://www.carrollhealthdepartment.dhmd.gov/>

Sincerely,

Chuck Ecker