

A Note from the Brunswick School Department Nurses

Dear Parents and Guardians;

Newspaper and television coverage of the early onset of influenza, and the severity of the outbreak, has raised the level of awareness of all of us over this potential public health problem.

As school nurses, we are asking for your help in the prevention of this contagious disease. When you question if your child is ill and could possibly have contracted a flu-like illness, please do not send him/her to school. Influenza is highly contagious, and the contagious period in children lasts up to 7 days.

The Centers for Disease Control offer the following information:

What is the flu?

Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). Unlike many other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, the flu causes severe illness.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Influenza is a respiratory illness. Symptoms of the flu include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. For a quick review of symptoms, please see Cold vs. Flu Chart.

How does it spread?

The main way influenza viruses spread is from person to person contact in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. Though much less frequent, the viruses also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long is a person contagious?

The period when a person is contagious depends on the age of the person. Adults may be contagious from one day prior to becoming sick and for three to seven days after they first develop symptoms. Some children may be contagious for longer than a week. **Children should not return to school until they are fever free for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medication and are not coughing up secretions.**

What can I do to protect myself against the flu?

Annual flu vaccination, particularly for individuals at high risk for serious complications, is the best way to prevent the flu. However, the following good health habits can also help prevent illness:

- ❖ Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- ❖ Stay home from school, work, and errands when you are sick.
- ❖ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- ❖ Wash your hands often.
- ❖ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

For more information

Visit www.cdc.gov/flu

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your school nurse.