



Colchester Public Schools

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Karen A. Loiselle
Superintendent of Schools

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September 3, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We are writing to obtain your help in keeping our school community as healthy as possible. During the last several months, we are sure that you have heard of the H1N1 influenza strain (Swine Flu). H1N1 is still prevalent and many more people may become affected in the coming months. Good hand washing and keeping sick individuals away from healthy individuals are key in controlling this and most other illnesses. **If your child(ren) is ill, it is important that he or she stay home from school.** Remaining at home when ill prevents the spread of the flu and other illnesses and helps the child to recover more quickly. We have shared this same message with our school staff to inform them of the importance of staying home when they are ill.

Please answer these questions before sending your child to school:

1. Does your child have a fever (100° F or 37.7°C)? If you do not have a thermometer, feel your child's skin with your hand. If it is much warmer than usual your child probably has a fever.
2. Does your child have a sore throat, cough, body aches, vomiting, or diarrhea?

If you answered "yes" to either or both questions above, your child may have the flu. Please keep him or her home from school until symptoms are gone for 24 hours without the use of medications.

If your child comes to school with the symptoms described above, or develops these symptoms while at school, he/she will be sent home and must remain home until symptoms are gone for 24 hours without the use of medications.


Also, as a reminder, now would be a good time to consider what arrangements you would need to make for the care of your child at home, if they become sick. They should not be sent to another childcare setting where they would be interacting with other children and adults who are well.

If your child is ill with any of the symptoms listed above, please call and speak with your child's school nurse. This will enable the school system to better monitor the emergence of H1N1 (Swine Flu) in the school setting.

Included with this letter please find the Center for Disease Control Prevention's (CDC) Parent Fact Sheet for preventing the spread of flu. We ask that you read and follow the action steps, and to consult with your school nurse and/or your child's health care provider if you have any questions.

Thank you for helping us to keep the school environment as healthy as possible for all students and staff.

Sincerely,


Karen A. Loiselle
Superintendent of Schools


Wendy Mis
Director of Health, Colchester Health Department

School Nurse Contact information:

Colchester Elementary School 537-0717
Jack Jackter Intermediate School 537-9421
William J. Johnston Middle School 537-2313
Bacon Academy 537-2378

Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year
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 when vaccines are available.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- 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.
- 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.
- Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.

If flu conditions become severe there will be additional guidelines from the CDC.

Visit our school website www.colchesterct.org for updated information and additional school communications.

For more information:

- **Visit:** www.flu.gov
- **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888)232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov