

H1N1 Flu Update for St. Sebastian School

The first confirmed cases of H1N1 flu virus for students have been reported by parents/guardians. Overall we have not shown an increased level of absenteeism, but this week there are more and many area schools are showing higher absences.

As a reminder, here are some of the plans we have implemented at St. Sebastian School to deal with the flu virus outbreak:

1. A new health room procedure for students not feeling well that are sent to the office has been implemented. Students will be asked for symptoms and checked for a fever. If your child exhibits a fever and a flu symptom, you will be called to pick up your child. If the student is able, we will give him/her a medical mask to wear to stop the spread of the virus while he/she is waiting for a parent.
2. We are on an e-mail list from the Milwaukee City Health Department with H1N1 latest news.
3. Nurse Cathy from Children's Hospital constantly monitors our student population as it relates to H1N1 and keeps our staff updated on the situation and protocols.
4. We continue to stress good habits with coughs, sneezes, hand-washing and more with students. Teachers reinforce those habits and posters are in classrooms & bathrooms.
5. Our Maintenance staff will continue to follow preventative measures to reduce the spread of H1N1 and other seasonal flu strains. Classrooms are provided with sanitizers/cleaners for surfaces, and classrooms with reported H1N1 cases are disinfected overnight. If families are interested in helping, we will accept classroom donations of single-use antiseptic wipes/cleaners (like Clorox wipes), tissues, or bottles of hand sanitizers (50% alcohol-base).
6. As always, we ask students and parents to do their part and keep ill students at home to prevent the spread of H1N1.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD HAS THE FLU:

If you think your child has the flu, keep him/her home from school and all extra curricular activities. When you call school to report your child's absence, we would appreciate you informing us if you suspect or can confirm that it is the flu. This information will be kept confidential.

The Center for Disease Control suggests that students who do become ill not return to school until twenty-four hours after their fever has broken naturally and they are feeling better. Please do not be selfish to the rest of our students and staff by sending an ill child to school.

KEEPING UP WITH STUDIES:

Obviously, no time is a good time to be absent from school. Should your child need to stay home due to the flu, we will make every effort, as is our common practice, to assist him/her with his/her studies during the absence. Work can be requested after the third day

absent through the office. You can always use the Buzz Book and call a classmate if your child is feeling good enough to do work.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Mr. Hohl or office staff.

Sincerely,

St. Sebastian School Staff

FLU PREVENTION MEASURES:

- * Vaccination
- * Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (and throw the tissue away after use).
- * Wash hands with soap and water OR use alcohol based hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- * Try to stop the spread of disease - if you get the flu, stay home from work or school.

Source: Medical College of Wisconsin, 2009

Information Resources:

- * Milwaukee Health Department:
<http://www.milwaukee.gov/fluseason/2009H1N1Flu.htm>
- * U.S. Federal Government: www.flu.gov
- * Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm>

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we enter the new school year and the new traditional influenza season, we expect Wisconsin to continue seeing cases of the new pandemic flu. School and public health officials are working to keep our children safe and healthy. *We need your help!*

The most important thing you can do is to keep your child home if he or she is ill. If your child is so sick that you would normally seek medical care, please do so. The new pandemic flu is very similar to ordinary seasonal flu. Each morning, parents and caregivers should check their children and other family members for flu symptoms such as fever, cough, or sore throat. A few cases of pandemic influenza have begun with nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea symptoms.

All sick students should stay out of school 24 hours after fever has resolved without use of fever-reducing medication. This is typically 3-5 days. Ill students should not attend alternative childcare. If a child or adult is ill with other symptoms, they should stay home at least one day to see how the illness develops and until completely well for 24 hours. Children who are ill upon arrival at school or become ill during the school day will be sent home. Children and adults who are ill should stay home and not go into the community unless they need medical care. **Notify the school of all flu-like absences and symptoms or confirmed cases of pandemic flu.**

At this time, health and school officials are not recommending school closures for individual cases of H1N1 flu. However, as with regular seasonal flu, we might recommend closing schools if larger numbers of students or faculty become ill.

In addition to staying home when sick, here are three important things you and your family can do to help stay healthy and keep others safe:

- **Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread that way.**

Again, contact your medical provider and seek medical care if that is what you would normally do.

More information about new H1N1 flu is available on the following web sites:

<http://pandemic.wi.gov/>

<http://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/health>

Thank you for your patience and cooperation during this time. With your help, we can help keep everyone safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Paul Hohl, Principal
Cathy Trecek, School Nurse
St. Sebastian

Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- ▶ Be prepared to support home learning activities if the school makes them available. Your child's school may offer web-based lessons, instructional phone calls, and other types of distance learning. Have school materials, such as text books, workbooks, and homework packets available at home.
- ▶ Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- ▶ Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children dismissed from school. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.
- ▶ If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

- ▶ **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.
- ▶ **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- ▶ **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting



- Not waking up or not interacting
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- ▶ **Check with your doctor about any special care** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.
- ▶ **Have the sick household member wear a facemask** – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
- ▶ **Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines** for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome
- ▶ **Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

If your health department says that flu conditions have become more severe

- ▶ **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 gone away.
- ▶ **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.

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

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.

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

- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **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.

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.
- ▶ Talk to your school administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

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Action Steps for Parents of Children at High Risk for Flu Complications

Children with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic conditions, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, or who are pregnant are at higher risk of having complications from flu. In addition, all children younger than 5 years old are at higher risk of flu complications compared to older children. If you are not sure if any of your children are at higher risk for flu complications, please check with a doctor.

Keep children at high risk for flu complications from getting sick with the flu

- ▶ **Make sure your child's hands are washed** for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ Have your child **cough and sneeze into a tissue** or into his or her elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available.
- ▶ **Keep your child away from people who are sick.**
- ▶ **Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches** with cleaning agents that are usually used.
- ▶ When there is flu in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of flu, **people who are at risk of complications from flu should consider staying away from public gatherings.**
- ▶ If flu is severe in your community, talk to your doctor and child's school to **develop a plan on how to handle your child's special needs.**
- ▶ **Get your child vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

Recognize if your children are sick

Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can result in a delay in responding to their illness. It is important to watch carefully for the signs and symptoms of flu or unusual behavior that may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, your child might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- ▶ Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- ▶ Bluish or gray skin color
- ▶ Not drinking enough fluids



- ▶ Not urinating or no tears when crying
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Not waking up or not interacting
- ▶ Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- ▶ Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- ▶ Sudden dizziness
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Please share this information with your child's teacher or other caregivers, so they can tell you if they notice your child is not feeling well.

Tips for taking care of high risk children with the flu

- ▶ **Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child at home** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor.
- ▶ **Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants, Pedialyte®) to keep from being dehydrated.
- ▶ **If your child has a fever, use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor recommends** based on your child's age. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.

For more information:

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