

November 6, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We are writing to update you on the flu situation in New Hampshire and in SAU 56.

For several weeks, NH has been among the states where the Centers for Disease Control is reporting widespread influenza-like illness. The NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is tracking school absences throughout the state. Our school nurses and school administrators continue to be in close contact with NH(DHHS) to assure that we continue to take prevention measures and are managing the illnesses in our schools. In short, it is clear that the flu is in our communities, that it is spreading, and that more people will probably be affected before it peaks. Most cases of flu-like illnesses are now due to the H1N1 virus.

The preventative measures continue to be the same:

- **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective. Do not share drinking bottles or eating utensils
- **Practice respiratory etiquette** by covering 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. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius. Look for possible signs of fever: if the person feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.
- **Stay home if you have flu or flu-like illness for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever** (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Don't go to class or work.

***In addition please have a plan in place to pick up your child should your child's school call because we will be sending your child home.**

There are currently no routine recommendations to close schools in NH because of illness or to keep healthy children home from school. If any family members who are pregnant, have asthma or any other underlying health condition become sick with flu like symptoms, they are advised to contact a health care provider at the onset of these symptoms.

Sick students will not be penalized for staying home. All of the principals in SAU 56 will make sure that students have ample opportunity to make up missed work. We do ask that parents contact their children's school to let us know that they are out because of illness and to report whether they have flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, body aches, sometimes vomiting and diarrhea).

We also encourage all students and staff to get both the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines, if possible. This is especially important for children with chronic illnesses such as asthma and other underlying health conditions, as well as for pregnant women. Unfortunately, vaccine supplies all over the country are limited due to manufacturing delays. Vaccine availability in NH changes on a daily basis. Please contact your health care provider's office to find out if your child can be immunized there or if you have specific questions about your own children.

For more information: The NH DHHS has set up a special flu "hot-line" – just call 2-1-1 (8AM – 5PM) to talk to someone. There is also a lot of reliable information on the CDC and NH DHHS websites: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu and http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/swineflu.htm.

Thank you for working with us to keep everyone in our schools as healthy as possible during this flu season.

Sincerely,

Karen Soule, Superintendent SAU 56, Somersworth and Rollinsford School Nurses