

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ❖ ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

16 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720-2995 Phone: 978-264-4700 x3211 Fax: 978-264-3340 Email: smills@mail.ab.mec.edu

September 7, 2009

Stephen E. Mills, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you probably know, there are different strains of flu, including the new H1N1 strain ("swine flu"). So far, the symptoms of the new H1N1 flu are similar to those of seasonal flu. But **any** flu virus can cause serious illness, so we are working every closely with local and state health and school officials to try to prevent the spread of the flu among students and staff.

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) anticipates a significant increase in H1N1 flu this year with school-aged children being one of the groups most likely to become sick and spread the illness. Therefore, the Acton and Acton-Boxborough School leadership team, including the Superintendent, Director of Pupil Services, school nurses and school physicians, is working with the Acton Board of Health to plan for a possible H1N1 flu outbreak as well as for the regular seasonal flu season. Following current guidelines from the CDC, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), **our goal is to keep schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season.**

Here are a few things parents/guardians, school staff and other adults can do to help:

- **Get your child both the H1N1 and seasonal flu shots.** Vaccination is the best way to keep your child from getting the flu.
- **Teach children to wash their hands often.** Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach children to use hand sanitizer.** Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Watch small children using gels so they don't swallow it.
- **Teach children to cough or sneeze into their elbow—not their hands!** Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. They should wash their hands after blowing their nose or coughing into a tissue.
- **Teach children to avoid touching their nose, mouth or eyes.** They should keep their hands away from their face.

- **Teach children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, 38.0 degrees Celsius 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.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever without using fever-reducing drugs like Motrin, Advil, Tylenol or a store brand. For most children, this will be about 4 days. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.

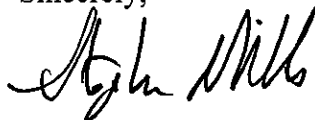
For more information about flu in our community and what our school is doing, you may wish to refer to our district website, <http://ab.mec.edu>.

For more information from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools (DESE) and/or the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), please refer to the following websites:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/swineflu

DESE Swine Information for Schools:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pandemic/swineflu>.

Sincerely,



Stephen Mills



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health*

Flu Symptom Check List for Families and Schools

Updated August 31, 2009

The main symptoms of influenza (flu) include **fever and cough and/or sore throat**. Some people also have a runny nose, body aches, headache, chills and feel tired. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. The most important thing that you can do to keep flu from spreading in the community is to keep your sick child at home when they are sick.

SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD HOME?

Yes No Has your child had a fever of 100.4 degrees or more in the past 24 hours?

Yes No Does your child have a cough **OR** sore throat?

If you answered YES to both questions above, keep your child home.

Your child has an influenza-like illness.

CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Yes No Has your child had a fever of 100.4 degrees or more in the past 24 hours?

Yes No Has your child had acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) in the past 24 hours?

If you answered NO to both questions above, your child can return to school.

If you answered YES to either one of the questions above, your child **CANNOT return to school.** Keep your child home for at least another day to observe for additional symptoms. Then use the check list questions again to decide whether you should continue to keep your child home.

Where can I find more information about influenza?

- 1) Call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health information line: 211
- 2) Go to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health influenza website: mass.gov/flu
- 3) A "**Fever Fact Sheet**" with information on how to take a temperature is also available.