

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Below is a letter from Superintendent Stephen Mills regarding a flu update.

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ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ❖ ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Flu Update

November 1, 2009

Dear parents and guardians,

As written by Commissioner Jon Auerbach, Department of Public Health, "the residents of Massachusetts and the nation face the unusual occurrence of two simultaneous types of influenza - both seasonal and H1N1. Fortunately, we have very effective tools to prevent both influenza in the form of safe and reliable vaccines. Unfortunately, neither the seasonal nor the H1N1 vaccines are as available as we would like."

In continued partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and the Acton Board of Health, the Acton and Acton-Boxborough Schools continue to take this situation seriously. We know that currently several efforts are being undertaken to ensure that we minimize illness and harm to the public and are grateful for your cooperation. Specifically, we recognize that everyone is taking steps and making the extra effort to become aware of the facts, to practice good health hygiene, and most importantly, to keep children at home when they are sick.

We acknowledge that the vaccine supply situation is complex and confusing. As vaccine supplies arrive in larger quantities, more and more providers will receive vaccine for their patients. It is our understanding that eventually, flu clinics for the general public will begin and we are prepared to support those efforts based on availability and delivery of vaccine. Based on recommendations by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), vaccine is reserved first for people at especially high risk for the flu which includes pregnant women, children, caregivers of infants and healthcare workers.

We in Acton as well as school systems across the Commonwealth have been notified that the Department of Public Health no longer confirms cases of H1N1 or seasonal flu. As such, we are unable to report whether or not a student or staff person is diagnosed with specific H1N1. However, based on the MDPH guidelines (fever, cough, sore throat),

our nursing staff are currently screening and tracking for influenza like illness and have appreciated the specific phone messages that have been received by families keeping their children at home. Please be aware that Liza Huber, our Director of Pupil Services and I track attendance patterns daily and thus far, the overall percentage of students out sick in each school remains low.

As a reminder, we continue to follow these steps to help prevent getting or spreading any type of influenza:

1. **Become aware of the facts.** We encourage everyone to visit the CDC's new web site at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/ Moreover, the DPH has its own regularly updated blog at www.mass.gov/blog/publichealth.
2. **Continue to practice good health hygiene.** Disease transmission can be significantly reduced by taking the following actions:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based cleaners are also effective.
 - Practice good "cough etiquette" by coughing or sneezing into a tissue, or into your elbow instead of into your hands.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.

Please click on the website: www.mass.gov.dph website for the Swine Flu Public Health Fact Sheet and additional information that may be helpful for you and your family.

If you should still have additional questions or concerns, please contact the Acton Board of Health at 978-264-9634.

Sincerely,

Stephen Mills