

Shoo, flu, don't bother me!

We are beginning to see the flu and flu-like illnesses that we normally see at this time of year, and we need your help. If your child is sick with flu-like symptoms (temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more, sore throat, cough), please keep your child home and call our school nurse or attendance clerk and let them know. The Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is asking us to track all possible cases of flu-like illnesses.

Flu, caused by a virus, affects the entire body especially the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs). It can be mild, like a bad cold, or it can be very serious. Colds, however, usually begin slowly. They start with a scratchy, sore throat, then sneezing and a runny nose. The flu usually comes on very suddenly and often begins with a headache, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, sweating, chills, watery eyes and extreme fatigue. Individuals with the flu usually have a temperature of 100 degrees or higher.

Flu spreads when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes or talks sending the virus into the air. Other people then inhale the virus, which enters the nose, throat or lungs of a person and begins to multiply, causing symptoms of influenza. Less often, flu spreads when a person touches a surface that has flu viruses on it — a door handle, for instance — and then touches his or her nose or mouth.

As you know, a sick child does not perform well in class and can expose his classmates to his virus or other illness. If your child complains that he does not feel well, please check his temperature before sending him to school. If he has a fever of 100 degrees or more before you give him Tylenol, Advil, Motrin or some other appropriate fever reducing medication, keep your child at home. (Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms and particularly fever without first speaking to your doctor. Giving aspirin to children and teenagers who have the flu can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.)

Your child should not return to school until he has been fever free without the help of Tylenol or another product for 24 hours. When your child does come back to school, he should go by the nurse's office and have his temperature checked before he goes to his classroom.

Make sure that our school has your current emergency telephone numbers so that we don't have trouble reaching you when your child is sick so that you can pick him up. We know you don't want your sick child spending hours in the health room because we can't reach you.

Finally, in order to keep your child well, remind him to wash his hands often and thoroughly or to clean them with alcohol-based hand cleaner. Tell him to cover his cough with a tissue, sleeve or elbow and not his hand; to not touch his face, eyes or mouth; and to not share his food, drink or eating utensils with others.