

# Influenza (Flu) in Schools

## What can schools do to prevent the spread of flu?

- Promote flu vaccination for all students, staff, and families throughout flu season.
- Be aware of flu symptoms:
  - Fever
  - Headache
  - Fatigue
  - Cough
  - Sore throat
  - Body aches
- Promote hand hygiene, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, and staying home when sick for both students and staff.
- Give students and staff tissues to cover coughs and sneezes as well as liquid soap, paper towels, and time to wash their hands.
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly used areas and frequently touched surfaces. Flu can remain on surfaces for up to 8 hours.
- Follow package instructions when cleaning for contact time and dilution.

## Do schools need to provide antibacterial soap?

No. Regular soap is effective. Antibacterial products have not been proven to prevent the spread of infection better than regular soap.

## Should students with influenza- like illness (ILI) be excluded from school?

Yes. Students and staff with ILI should stay home from school and school activities. ILI is defined as a fever (at least 100°F) and a cough or sore throat. Students and staff who become ill during the day should be immediately isolated from others and sent home. Students and staff can return to school 24 hours after their fever is gone without fever-reducing medication, (e.g., Tylenol or Advil). They should also be well enough to participate in school before returning.

## Should schools close due to flu?

We do not recommend closing schools to prevent flu transmission. However, schools may choose to close or dismiss students if a large number of absences prevent normal school functioning.

## When should schools report ILI?

For respiratory illness, K-12 schools should report via the REDCap survey when 10% of their student population is absent from school on a given day with respiratory illness symptoms and/or a respiratory illness diagnosis. This threshold applies to all school levels. There is no longer a separate threshold for elementary schools. Submit one report when you reach the 10% student threshold. You do not need to submit a new report for at least two weeks (14 days) after the initial report. Individual cases of lab-confirmed flu do not need to be reported.

Reporting instructions can be found at [Influenza Surveillance Protocol and Frequently Asked Questions \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html).

## Where can schools get current information on flu?

Visit [www.mdhflu.com](http://www.mdhflu.com) and click on “For Schools” in the left sidebar to get flu-related guidance, reporting forms, templates, and more. Subscribe to receive email updates when the site has been updated. Look for the red envelope at the top of the page and click “subscribe.”

Minnesota Department of Health  
PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975  
651-201-5414 | [www.mdhflu.com](http://www.mdhflu.com)

08/16/2023

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.