

Student Health Services Flu Season Update 2017-2018 School Year

Flu Season Is Here...

This time of the year is often referred to as "flu season." According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), influenza (also called flu) viruses and influenza-like illnesses typically circulate widely in the United States from late Fall through early Spring. Although most persons with flu will recover, influenza can cause a serious illness and possibly death, particularly among older adults, very young children, pregnant women, and those with certain chronic medical conditions. Flu viruses tend to peak between December and March, but the timing of flu is very unpredictable and can vary in different parts of the country and from season to season. Doctors at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta say flu season usually starts to peak in metro Atlanta right after the holidays in January, when all the kids go back to school. Each year, the Georgia Department of Public Health helps CDC track flu activity throughout the State and reports findings weekly in an Influenza Report. Additionally, this year with the passing of House Bill 198 during the 2017 Legislative session, schools are required to provide information on influenza and flu vaccine to parents and guardians of students in grades 6 through 12. With this in mind, Student Health Services is sharing the following updated information as we have done annually each year:

CDC and public health officials recommends everyone – 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine every year. It is especially important for school personnel to get a flu vaccine because children are amongst the most vulnerable to the flu.

Flu vaccines are also particularly important for people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza such as young children, adults over age 65, pregnant women, and people with chronic illnesses like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. Flu vaccination has important benefits which includes reducing flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. The flu is spread mainly from person to person through coughing, sneezing and touching surfaces with the flu virus on it. Typical symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, running or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue.

Therefore, it is important for us to remind parents, students and school staff to get vaccinated every year. Vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu. And by the way, it is a myth: The flu vaccine cannot cause flu. The vaccine contains an inactivated virus or virus particles.



What else can you do to help prevent the spread of the flu and other infectious illnesses?

The first thing is simple...**WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY!** Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer/rub. **Did you know the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infectious illnesses is washing your hands?** While most of us already know this, it is sometimes hard to remember this simple little important task during a busy day.

Some additional preventive measures you can do to help reduce the spread of flu and other infectious illnesses include:

- Teach children not to share personal items like drinks, food, eating utensils or other personal items such as towels, combs, brushes, clothes, and cosmetics;
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and properly dispose of used tissues. If you do not have a tissue, use your elbow, arm or sleeve when coughing or sneezing instead of the hand (avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth – germs spread this way);
- Wash athletic practice clothing each day, and shower after any contact sport;
- Stay home if you are sick and not going to a medical care facility, especially during the first days of illness when symptoms are more severe and the infection is most contagious. Return to work or school only after symptoms have improved and after you have had no fever for at least 24 hours;



- Try to avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu. Viruses lurk in places you wouldn't think. Everyone is vulnerable to picking up viruses.
- Eat healthy food (fruits and veggies) and drink plenty of fluids;
- Make sure your vaccinations are up-to-date;
- Take flu antiviral medications if your doctor prescribes them;
- Again, get vaccinated against the flu – flu vaccination is the best protection against the flu, and wash your hands frequently!



In Fulton County Schools, Student Health Services works in collaboration with our Registered School Nurses, Clinic Assistants, Administrators, and school staff to ensure we adhere to our guidelines for identifying, reporting, managing and preventing suspected and/or confirmed infectious illnesses. By working together, we can help reduce the transmission of the flu and other infectious illnesses in the schools and community. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Health Services at 470-254-2177 or your health care provider.

More information about the flu and flu vaccine can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm> and <https://dph.georgia.gov/flu-activity-georgia>.

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