

# 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 influenza-like illness (ILI)?

All K-12 schools should report to the Minnesota Department of Health throughout the school year when they reach these thresholds:

- **For all schools, including elementary:** Report when 5 percent or more of the total school enrollment is absent with ILI, or
- **For elementary schools only:** Report if three students from one classroom are sent home or absent with ILI on a given day.

Schools do not need to report subsequent days of the same outbreak. An outbreak is considered over when ILI activity goes below the threshold for at least three weeks. Report a new outbreak if you reach the threshold again after a minimum of three weeks. Individual cases of lab-confirmed flu do not need to be reported.

Reporting instructions and forms are at [Influenza Surveillance Protocol and Frequently Asked Questions for Minnesota Schools](#)

([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html)).

## Where can schools get current information on flu?

Go to [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.”

Vaccine-Preventable Disease Section  
PO Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975  
651-201-5414  
[www.mdhflu.com](http://www.mdhflu.com)

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