

Influenza (“The Flu”) Recommendations for Schools

Influenza (“the flu”) is a respiratory disease that spreads easily. It is characterized by the sudden onset of fever, body aches, sore throat, headache, tiredness and cough, and, in children, also can cause diarrhea and vomiting. The following recommendations can help prevent the spread of influenza in schools.

- **Any ill employee, student, teacher or other staff member should not attend school.**
- **Wash hands frequently** using soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds (about the time it takes to sing the ABCs). Dry hands with paper towels or automatic dryers. Allow regular breaks for the students and teachers to wash hands. It is especially important to wash hands before eating and after using the restroom. Young children should be instructed and assisted to ensure proper hand washing. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and towels are available.
- Flu is often spread by coughs or sneezes. Make sure tissues are available in all classrooms for runny noses or sneezing. Staff and children should always cover their mouths when coughing and use a disposable tissue when sneezing or blowing their noses. Tissues should be thrown away immediately, and then hands should be washed. (If you cannot wash hands, rub hands with an alcohol hand sanitizer.)
- Schools with 10 percent or more of their total population absent on a given day due to illness should report this to the North Dakota Department of Health (800.472.2180). Reporting outbreaks assists in disease surveillance and understanding the impact on the community.
- Staff and students with high-risk medical conditions should get a flu shot. A flu shot greatly reduces the chance of getting the flu and decreases the chance of becoming seriously ill. It is never too late in the flu season to get a flu shot.
- Closure of individual schools in the event of an outbreak has not proven to be an effective way of stopping the flu, but that decision should be made by the appropriate school officials based on other considerations.
- Schools should be extra-vigilant that ill students be excluded from sports activities, choir or any activities that may involve close contact, since transmission of the flu may be easier in these situations. All students and staff should avoid sharing of saliva by not sharing glasses, water bottles, other drinks, forks and spoons, kissing, etc.
- Common-use surfaces – such as door handles, handrails, eating surfaces, desks etc. – should be cleaned frequently with disinfectants. Commercial disinfectants or bleach solutions are appropriate. (Mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bleach with 1 gallon of water makes a bleach solution. Bleach solutions should be prepared daily.)