

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to advise you the _____ School is reporting numerous cases of students who are ill with flu-like symptoms. It is important to know the difference between influenza, cold and norovirus symptoms. All three are extremely contagious. Influenza and cold viruses are spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Norovirus is spread by touching surfaces or objects and eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with the virus.

- Common symptoms of influenza flu include fever, headache, muscle and body aches, chills, sore throat, exhaustion and dry cough. Children may also have nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Cold symptoms often come on gradually and they include stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and hacking cough.
- Norovirus-the stomach bug, causes acute gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) and infected persons can feel extremely ill with diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain/cramping and may also experience headache and fever.

Steps to keep your child healthy:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent influenza infection is to get a flu vaccine. There is no vaccine available for norovirus.

Talk to your child about practicing good health habits:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can also be used if soap and water is not available.
- Cover mouth and nose into the inside of the elbow or with a tissue when sneezing or coughing and dispose of the tissue immediately into the trash.
- Avoid touching the “T zone”- eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid sharing drinks, water bottles, eating utensils and cell phones.

Prevent spreading illness to others:

- Keep your sick child home from school until he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication). It is important for your ill child to get rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- At home, disinfect frequently touched surfaces, toys and commonly shared items. Wash contaminated clothing or linen immediately with detergent at the maximum available cycle length and then machine dry.

Go to www.cdc.gov for more information or contact your school nurse _____.

