



Holyoke Public Schools – 57 Suffolk Street - Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040

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Dr. Eduardo B. Carballo, Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

As a parent, you want to do everything possible to protect your children from the flu. This is especially important when a new flu virus like H1N1 flu is spreading. We expect to see both seasonal flu and H1N1 flu this fall.

We want to work together with you to protect the health of students and provide the education they deserve. We will do this by preventing the spread of the flu in schools and keeping schools open. It is important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and how to protect others from becoming infected. If we all practice good hygiene, we can limit the spread of flu in our schools.

What can I do to keep my child from getting sick?

- **Get your child both the H1N1 and seasonal flu shots.** Vaccination is the best way to keep your child from getting the flu.
- **Teach your children to wash their hands often.** Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.)
- **Teach your children to use hand sanitizer.** Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol.
- **Teach your children to cough or sneeze into their elbow – not their hands.** Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. They should wash their hands after blowing their nose or coughing into a tissue.
- **Teach your children to avoid touching their nose, mouth or eyes.** They should keep their hands away from their face.

What should I do if my child is sick?

If you think your child is getting the flu:

- Keep your child home. It is very important that your child does not go to school or other places where he/she could spread the flu virus to other people, such as group childcare, after school programs, the mall, or sporting events.
- Call your doctor’s office and let them know your child’s symptoms and history. Your doctor will advise you whether you should come to the office.
- Call your child’s school to notify them that your child is sick, and tell the school nurse if your child has flu-like symptoms.
- Keep your school nurse updated on your child’s medical condition.
- Do not give your child or teenager (18 years of age or younger) aspirin or aspirin-containing products due to the rare but serious illness called Reye Syndrome.
- All individuals with flu-like symptoms should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without using fever-reducing medicines. These medicines include Motrin or Advil (ibuprofen), Tylenol (acetaminophen) or a store brand.

“A community working together to prepare our students for their future”

- Schools are **not** allowed to accept a doctor’s note recommending a child with flu-like symptoms return to school before the time period described above.

What precautions are being taken at schools?

- School nurses and teachers have been and will continue to remind and teach students about hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes.
- School nurses will keep track of students who are sick with flu-like symptoms so that potential outbreaks can be identified quickly.
- School nurses are working closely with local and state public health authorities as questions arise.

Where can I get more information?

- Massachusetts Department of Public Health website at www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health information line at 211
- Holyoke Public Schools website at www.hps.holyoke.ma.us

Sincerely,

Eduardo B. Carballo
Superintendent

Flu Symptom Checklist for Families and Schools

The main symptoms of influenza (flu) include **fever and cough and/or sore throat**. Some people also have a runny nose, body aches, headache, chills and feel tired. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. The most important thing that you can do to keep flu from spreading in the community is to keep your sick child at home when they are sick.

Should I keep my child home?		
Yes	No	Has your child had a fever of 100.4 degrees or more in the past 24 hours?
Yes	No	Does your child have a cough or sore throat?
<p>If you answered <u>yes</u> to <u>both</u> questions above, keep your child home. Your child has an influenza-like illness.</p>		
Can my child return to school?		
Yes	No	Has your child had a fever of 100.4 degrees or more in the past 24 hours?
Yes	No	Has your child had acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) in the past 24 hours?
<p>If you answered <u>no</u> to <u>both</u> questions above, your child can return to school.</p>		
<p>If you answered <u>yes</u> to either one of the questions above, your child <u>cannot</u> return to school. Keep your child home for at least another day to observe for additional symptoms. Then use the checklist questions again to decide whether you should continue to keep your child home.</p>		