



Town of Fairfield

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To: Parents and Guardians of Fairfield Students

From: Kenneth A. Flatto, First Selectman, Town of Fairfield *KAF*
Dr. Ann Clark, Superintendent, Fairfield Public Schools *AC*
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Dr. Francis Scholan MD, Town Medical Advisor, Town of Fairfield *FS*
Lynda Bluestein, Chairman, Fairfield Board of Health *LB*

Date: August 28, 2009

Re: Fall 2009 H1N1 flu and Seasonal flu Information

As we head into the new school year, public health professionals at the federal and state levels are advising that we should expect to see an increase in flu like symptoms this fall, possibly as soon as school resumes. The 2009 H1N1 flu is continuing to circulate and as we approach the seasonal flu period, it is possible that both will be co-circulating over the next several months.

Currently the 2009 H1N1 flu remains similar, in severity of illness, as in the spring of 2009. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations provided in this letter are based upon conditions currently being seen which are similar to what was experienced in the spring of 2009. If a more severe illness is being seen than in the spring of 2009, the CDC has developed additional recommendations that can be considered; these can be reviewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/schoolguidance.htm>

To provide Fairfield residents with one source of the most current information, starting in early September the Health Department and Fairfield Public School's Central Office Administration will work together to post updates on the Town website at www.fairfieldct.org that will include the following information:

- Number of reported flu cases received by the Health Department (laboratory or MD reports of testing)
- When flu like illness begins to be seen in the Town's schools
- When a 2009 H1N1 flu case has been laboratory confirmed in a Fairfield resident who attends a particular school
- School absenteeism information
- General updates and recommendations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
2. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available. Both private medical practices and the Health Department will be offering seasonal and H1N1 vaccinations this fall. Seasonal flu vaccination may start as early as September and small amounts of H1N1 vaccine are expected to be available for specific high risk groups sometime after mid-October. Check the Town of Fairfield website at www.fairfieldct.org for information on seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination.

Follow these general steps to be prepared for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- Plan for how your child will be picked up from school if ill (if you are not typically available during school hours). Ensure those designated to pick a child up are listed on the emergency contact card at the school
- Be aware that for students seen by the school nurse who appear to have flu-like illness, the CDC recommends to have them sent to a room or area that is separate from others until they can be sent home. In addition, the CDC recommends that those waiting to go home should wear a surgical mask, if it is tolerated.
- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Consider a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.
- Update emergency contact lists/information at home and what you have provided the schools.
- Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.

Additional Steps for Parents of Children at High Risk for Flu Complications

Children with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic conditions, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, or adolescents who are pregnant are at higher risk of having complications from flu. In addition, all children younger than 5 years old are at higher risk of flu complications compared to older children. If you are not sure if any of your children are at higher risk for flu complications, please check with a doctor.

In addition to the above recommendations, to keep children at high risk for flu complications from getting sick with the flu you should:

- **Keep your child away from people who are sick.**
- **Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches** with cleaning agents that you typically use.
- When there is flu in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of flu, consider keeping your child away from public gatherings.

Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick. This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child. Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor.

Recognize if your children are sick. Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can result in a delay in responding to their illness. It is important to watch carefully for the signs and symptoms of flu or unusual behavior that may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, your child might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

As we all prepare for this year's seasonal flu and the likely 2009 H1N1 flu activity, we sincerely hope you find this information useful. For additional information and links to numerous federal and State of CT flu related websites please go to the Town Of Fairfield website at www.fairfieldct.gov.