

October 2009

Parents/Guardians:

Clinical providers throughout Missouri and Boone County are reporting an increase in patients with flu-like illness, many who have tested positive for Influenza A. CDC is identifying 99% of the positive Influenza A cultures as H1N1 and it appears widespread throughout the US. It is unusual at this time of year to see the level of flu activity that has been reported.

At this time, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the primary means to reduce the spread of influenza in schools is to focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill and the use of good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. This includes:

- Those who are ill with a flu-like illness should be instructed to remain home from school/and or work or activities where they could expose others. The recommendation from the CDC is to stay home for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- 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.
- Avoid sharing drinks, water bottles or silverware with others.

Seasonal flu vaccines are now available and H1N1 vaccines will soon be available and are highly recommended.

Columbia Public Schools appreciates the assistance from parents who are choosing to keep their students home from school who are ill and/or those who are beginning to show signs of illness. A physician visit is NOT required in order to return to school after an absence related to influenza. Thank you for your continued support.

Columbia Public Schools
Health Services