

Rensselaer Central Schools Corporation

Action Steps

Preparing for the Flu

(Including H1N1 Flu)

August 2009

1. Action Steps for Our Schools to Prevent the Spread of Flu:

Educate and encourage students and staff to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.

Remind teachers, staff, and students to practice good hand hygiene and provide the time and supplies for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.

Send sick students, teachers, and staff home and advise them and their families that sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.

Move students, teachers, and staff to a separate room if they become sick at school until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.

Have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks available and ensure the equipment is worn by school nurses and other staff caring for sick people at school.

Encourage early medical evaluation for sick students and staff at higher risk of complications from flu. People at high risk of flu complications who get sick will benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.

Stay in regular communication with local public health officials.

2. Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family From the Flu This School Year:

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.

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.

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.

Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

3. Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home:

Be prepared to support home learning activities if the school makes them available. Your child's school may offer web-based lessons, instructional phone calls, and other types of distance learning. Have school materials, such as text books, workbooks, and homework packets available at home.

Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.

Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children dismissed from school. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.

If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu:

Stay home if you or your child is sick until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.

Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.

Keep sick household members in a separate room (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.

Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. 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, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting

4. **Action Steps for Teachers to Prevent the Spread of Flu:**

Take the following steps ALL the time and not only during a flu pandemic to help keep your students and yourself from getting sick with flu.

Educate and encourage students to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.

Remind students to practice good hygiene and provide the time and supplies (easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners) for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.

Be a good role model by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Keep an eye out for sick students and send them to the school health office for further evaluation. Sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.

Teachers should also stay home when sick. Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

Please monitor our website, local news and newsletters in the future. We will keep you informed and will strive to communicate all important information concerning the flu during the school year.

If you have questions or concerns please contact your child's school.

Thank you.