

# **Fight the Flu!!**

## **PREVENTION TIPS FOR SCHOOLS**

Influenza can spread quickly in a school environment. Staff members miss on average one to 1-1/2 days of work due to flu each year, a rate that could double this year. Now with the threat of a pandemic outbreak on the horizon, it is more important than ever to promote proper health and hygiene procedures for the classroom. If we take proper steps, we can avoid the flu altogether, recover more quickly, and keep from infecting others.

Illnesses like the flu (influenza) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu and colds are primarily spread by inhaling droplets from the cough of ill people. The spread can be limited by staying at least 3 feet away from the coughing person, and by encouraging the person to cover his or her mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, thereby limiting droplet spread.

### **Flu**

Symptoms of the flu, which is a December to March illness, usually come on quickly and can include a high fever greater than 100°F, severe body aches, headache, dry cough, extreme fatigue and chills. Flu symptoms typically are severe and may last up to 3 weeks.

### **Cold**

Cold symptoms normally are not as severe and are less sudden in onset than influenza. They may include a runny nose, sneezing, coughing, sore throat, head and body aches, low fever (less than 101°F), and congestion of the ears, nose, throat and head. Colds typically are shorter in duration than influenza.

Here are some tips, from the Center for Disease Control, to protect yourself, friends, and family:

## **How to Help Stop the Spread of Germs**

### **Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough**

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow if a tissue is not handy. Then, wash your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

### **Avoid close contact**

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid friends or co-workers with a cold or flu (without making them feel insulted). Keep your distance (a minimum of three feet) from others to protect yourself from getting sick, too.

### **Stay home when you are sick**

When you are sick or have flu symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest, and check with a health care provider as needed.

### **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth**

Germs can live for a long time (some can live for 2 hours or more). Common cold viruses most often are picked up from germs on keyboards, door handles, etc., and then carried to the eyes, nose, or mouth.

### **Wash your hands often**

While hand washing may appear fundamental, many of us fail to wash our hands properly and as often as needed.

Step 1: Wet your hands with running water as hot as you can comfortably stand (at least 100°F [38°C]).

Step 2: Apply soap. Apply enough soap to build up a good lather.\*

Step 3: Vigorously scrub hands for at least twenty seconds.\*

Step 4: Clean under fingernails and between fingers.

Step 5: Rinse thoroughly under running water.

Step 6: Dry hands. Use single-use paper towels or a warm-air dryer. Never use aprons or wiping cloths to dry hands after washing.

\*It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.

Hand sanitizer should never be used in place of hand washing. However, if hand washing is not an option, a hand sanitizer should be used. Refrain from any interaction until the hand sanitizer has dried.

### **Practice other good health habits**

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of caffeine-free fluids (particularly water and juice), and eat nutritious food. Practicing healthy habits will help you stay healthy during flu season and all year long.

### **Train both students and staff members in the above hygiene procedures**