

**January 12, 2018**

**Dear Parents/Guardians,**

**Our nurses are sending home students from the first aid room that have been diagnosed with the flu virus and other types of sickness as well. Please note that we are following all recommendations from the Mobile County Health Department and Alabama Department of Public Health.**

**Please read the following information about the flu, what to do if you have flu-type symptoms, when to keep you child home from school, and how to keep your family healthy.**

**What is influenza (also called flu)?**

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu **vaccine** each year. I understand that the percentage of effectiveness of the vaccine is lower this flu season, but it is still a very important preventative step. **IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO GET YOUR CHILD THEIR FLU VACCINE!**

**Signs and symptoms of flu**

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

***\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.***

**How flu spreads**

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

**What should I do during flu season?**

As always, get a flu vaccine every year. Getting vaccinated is the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. Vaccination efforts should continue as long as influenza viruses are circulating.

Also, you can help stop the spread of influenza and other diseases by doing the following things:

- If you get sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Even if you do not have fever, but still have a severe cough, runny nose, and feeling terrible, please just stay home until you improve.
- Practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette to prevent the spread of germs.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.

While not a substitute for vaccination, these steps can help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like influenza.

And remember, there are antiviral drugs that can treat flu illness. They can make your illness milder and help you feel better faster. The physician must prescribe these medications for your child. They also can prevent serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia.

## **When Your Child Should NOT Be At School**

Many parents are concerned about when to keep students who have been ill home from school. These are a few of the most common reasons children should stay home or may be sent home from school.

- **FEVER:** Your child should stay home if he/she has a fever of **100 degrees** (orally) or higher and should remain home for 24 hours after the fever has gone without medication.
- **VOMITING AND/OR DIARRHEA:** Your child should stay home if he/she has vomited or has had diarrhea (more than two or three loose stools) just prior to the start of the school day and remain at home for 24 hours after the vomiting/diarrhea have subsided. If one or two loose stools are present along with vomiting or fever your child should remain at home. If diarrhea continues for more than 48 hours your child will need a doctor's written statement to return to school.
- **COUGHING/SNEEZING/NASAL DRAINAGE:** Your child should not come to school with excessive coughing, sneezing, and nasal drainage. If the child has been kept awake at night with these interruptions, please allow the child to recover at home.
- **FLU:** If your child has the flu-like symptoms, please seek medical attention and keep your child home from school. If you do seek medical attention early enough the antiviral drugs can shorten the number of days of severe symptoms. Please do not send students back too early.

**Please do not hesitate to contact the school nurse at your child's school for additional information, or contact me directly at my office 251-602-8975 or cell 251-586-1495.**

**Thank you,**

**Diana Collins MSN, RN**

**Supervisor of Health Services**