

Purpose

These guidelines are intended to aid schools in the identification, reporting, control, and prevention of suspected influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or influenza outbreaks.

Reporting Suspected Influenza/ILI Outbreaks

Monitoring for absenteeism, parent reports of influenza, or ILI can help in identifying potential outbreaks. ILI is defined as a fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ [37.8°C], oral or equivalent) AND cough and/or sore throat (without a known cause other than influenza). Immediately notify the regional health department when:

- 10% or more of the total student enrollment is absent on a given day for reasons not otherwise specified (e.g., a school with 250 students would contact DHEC when at least 25 students are absent for reasons not attributed to vacation, sporting events, inclement weather, etc).

OR

- 20% or more students are absent or sent home on a given day in a cohort (e.g., a classroom, sports teams, or other epidemiologically-linked group) attributed to ILI and/or influenza (e.g., a group with 20 students would contact DHEC when at least 4 students were absent or sent home with ILI and/or influenza).

Contact information for regional health departments can be found at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/Library/CR-009025.pdf>.

Please note: Initial reporting is the only requirement; reporting on subsequent days of the same outbreak is not required. However, during an outbreak, if an unusual or atypical situation arises (e.g., severe morbidity, multiple hospitalizations), please contact the regional health department. Outbreaks should be considered over when ILI/influenza absenteeism numbers within the school decrease to a percentage below the criteria listed above for 5 consecutive school days. Report a new outbreak if your school meets the above listed criteria again during the influenza season and a minimum of 5 days has passed.

What to Report

Provide the following information to the regional health department upon initial report:

- School size (e.g., student enrollment and number of staff employed)
- Criteria which prompted reporting of suspected outbreak (e.g., 10% or more absent for reasons not otherwise specified of the total student enrollment or 20% or more ILI/influenza in a cohort)
- Reported symptoms and testing information, if available

Special Circumstances

In the event of the following, schools may be required to report absenteeism rates and/or complete a line list:

- Reports of significant morbidity and mortality (e.g., hospitalizations and death)
- Emergence of a novel influenza strain.

Recommended Prevention and Control Measures

Vaccination¹

- The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older receive a flu shot every flu season. This is one of the most important prevention measures that can be taken to defend against influenza infection.

Implement Good Hygiene Etiquette²⁻⁴

- Reinforce opportunities for students and staff to engage in hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
- Students and staff should wash their hands upon reentering the building from recess, handling trash, before eating, after coughing and sneezing, and after using the bathroom.
- Students and staff should also cover their nose and mouth with a tissue or their upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Place tissue in a trash receptacle after use.

Limit Contact with Others When Sick

- Avoid close contact (i.e. within 6 feet) with ill persons.
- Stay home when experiencing influenza or ILI until free from fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Ensure staff or students with influenza or ILI are appropriately excluded from school. Follow the guidance outlined in the School and Childcare Exclusion List, available at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/library/CR-011634.pdf>
- Ensure procedures are in place to monitor reports of illness in students and staff.

Clean and Disinfect Surfaces⁵

- Routine cleaning and disinfecting using an EPA-registered disinfectant can aid in removing or killing influenza viruses on surfaces. Follow your facility's policies for cleaning and disinfecting. In particular, ensure that frequently touched surfaces such as door knobs, tables, desks, computer keyboards, handrails, etc., are routinely cleaned.
- According to the CDC, studies have shown that the ability for the flu virus to live and produce infection is up to 48 hours on surfaces; however, closing schools for special sanitizing procedures is not generally recommended or necessary.

Resources

¹ CDC. Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>

² CDC. Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives. <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>

³ SCDHEC. "Wash Hands" Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iFEvkaFh4>

⁴ CDC. Cover Your Cough. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

⁵ CDC. How to Clean and Disinfect Schools to Help Slow the Spread of Flu.

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>

For additional information, visit the CDC website on Information for Schools and Childcare Providers. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>