

September 10, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold and Illinois State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch are issuing flu guidance to schools to help reduce illness in schools statewide. The guidance is designed to decrease the spread of regular seasonal flu and the new H1N1 flu while limiting the disruption of day-to-day activities and the learning that goes on in schools.

We anticipate more illness from the H1N1 flu this fall compared to this past spring and more school-based outbreaks because influenza is typically transmitted more easily in fall and winter when students congregate indoors. By issuing guidance and planning now, we hope to ensure that we are prepared for any future flu activity.

In accordance with school guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Meridian CUSD #223 is issuing the following guidance:

Stay Home When Sick. Students and staff with flu-like symptoms (fever with a cough and/or sore throat, headache and body aches) must stay home for AT LEAST 24 HOURS AFTER THEY NO LONGER HAVE A FEVER without the use of fever-reducing medications (those containing Tylenol/acetaminophen or ibuprofen). Based on CDC guidelines, if an outbreak develops this will likely increase from 24 hours to 5-7 days.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette. Extra efforts are being made to emphasize basic health hygiene practices in the district. These precautions are vital to limiting the spread of illness.

- Hand Sanitizers have been installed in ALL district classrooms and lunchrooms and will be accessible on district buses now as well.
- School Nurses will be more aggressively educating students and staff on the signs and symptoms of flu and will continue to actively promote good health and hygiene by emphasizing the following:
 - Clean*** – Wash your hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs. This is still the BEST defense!
 - Cover*** – Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow or sleeve.
 - Contain*** – To minimize the spread of illness, students and staff should stay home when they are sick and not return until AT LEAST 24 hours after their fever breaks.

Routine Cleaning. The Building and Grounds Dept. has a progressive plan for cleaning and disinfecting in the event of an outbreak. Beginning steps for prevention in the current surveillance phase include but are not limited to:

- Cleaning of all hard surfaces in student areas will be increased to twice per week.
- Individual rooms/student areas will be cleaned more frequently as needed.
- Hard surfaces on buses will be cleaned weekly.

Separating Ill Students.

- Care will be given to keep students who are ill away from other students until a parent or guardian can pick them up. Masks may be used if necessary.
- In order to monitor and track the progress of H1N1 flu in the district, you will be asked to give some specific information when you call your student in for an illness related absence. Your help with this will allow us to relay accurate and timely information to the Health Dept.

School Dismissal. In the event of an expanded outbreak of the H1N1 flu, the district will be working closely with state and local health officials to balance the risks of flu in the community with the disruption that a school closure would cause both educationally and in the wider community.

These guidelines reflect our commitment to the students and families of our district as we deal with the potential threat of an H1N1 outbreak. Your cooperation in these efforts is both essential and appreciated.

Currently we are in Phase I (The Surveillance Phase) of our District's Emergency Response Plan. The above guidelines outline our general procedure at this time. Should it become necessary to progress into Phase II (Initial Outbreak Phase) or Phase III (Expanded Outbreak Phase) additional guidelines and procedures will be implemented and communicated via written memo, the district website and/or the All-Call phone messaging system.

Thank you in advance, for your cooperation and collaboration in helping to maintain a healthy and safety environment for our students. We will continue to communicate all pertinent information to you as it becomes available.

Sincerely,

Robert Prusator, Superintendent
Meridian CUSD #223

Dates to Remember:

October 1, 2009	Seasonal Flu Shot Clinic – FOR ADULTS ONLY 2-5 PM in the Jr. High Front Lobby Open to the community \$30 for the Seasonal Flu shot
October 30, 2009	Tentative Date for 1 st H1N1 Vaccine for students
November 20, 2009	Tentative Date for 2 nd H1N1 Vaccine for students