

December 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I'm writing to remind you that we are still in flu season and another "wave" of flu activity may be coming. The H1N1 flu is particularly dangerous for young children; please watch your children carefully for signs of flu-like illness. Following are tips from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) about how you can protect your child from the flu and how to tell if they are sick and need medical attention. If we all follow this advice, we have a better chance of returning to school in good health in 2010.

How to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu

WASH YOUR HANDS - wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

COVER COUGHS AND SNEEZES - cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. (If you use a tissue, throw it away and wash your hands.)

STAY HOME IF YOU'RE SICK – stay home for at least 24 hours after there no longer are signs of a fever (without the use of Tylenol or Advil). *** *PLEASE NOTE that aspirin should NOT be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.****

GET VACCINATED – It's not too late! Children are considered "high risk" for infection; get vaccinated for the H1N1 flu as soon as possible. (Children 9 and under need a second dose of the vaccine; wait at least 21 days from the first shot.) There is a separate vaccination for the seasonal flu. Contact your healthcare provider for more information.

How to Tell if Your Child is Sick with the Flu

Symptoms of flu include **fever and a cough or sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue** (tiredness). 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, your child might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering. Contact your medical provider if you have any questions.

How to Tell if a Child Needs Urgent Medical Attention:

- * Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- * Not drinking enough fluids
- * Severe or persistent vomiting
- * Being so irritable that the child doesn't want to be held
- * Sudden dizziness
- * Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- * Bluish or gray skin color
- * Not urinating or no tears when crying
- * Not waking up or not interacting
- * Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- * Confusion

For more information, please visit Marin County Department of Health and Human Services' flu website: www.marinflu.org or call the Marin **H1N1 Hotline at 473-6823** (answered 24 hours a day; 7 days a week). Additionally, information specific to schools can be obtained at the Marin County Office of Education website, "H1N1 Influenza Update" <http://www.marinschools.org/SwineFlu/swinefluupdate.htm>. Here's to a healthy and happy New Year!

Sincerely,

MARY JANE BURKE
Marin County Superintendent of Schools

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CHILDREN TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE SICK!