



Head of School Notes

Thursday, September 3, 2009

Special Flu Edition

Introduction

There has been a some discussion regarding the potential impact of an H1N1 (Swine Flu) outbreak at Covenant School this year. And while to this time **we have had no confirmed cases**, it does appear likely that at some point we will experience some cases of the H1N1 flu.

Should your child be diagnosed with the H1N1 or seasonal flu, especially if this has been confirmed by culture, please immediately inform Laurabeth Medlock in the school office (314-787-1036, lmedlock@cpcstl.org). We would then take the necessary steps and precautions to monitor the spread of the illness among our folks.

It is our intent to communicate with the Covenant School community as necessary.

In order to prepare, we are sharing these guidelines with you which come as recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Please review these guidelines and reinforce them with your student as community-wide compliance will be helpful in keeping everyone healthy this year.

Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

- Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
- Stay home if you or your child is sick for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine such as Advil or Tylenol). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
- Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

If Flu Conditions Become More Severe We May Consider the Following:

- Extend the time sick children stay home for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
- If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Follow These Steps to Prepare for the Flu at Home

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.

- Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
- Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.

Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- Be prepared to support home learning activities as Covenant School will make them available.
- Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

Tips for Taking Care of Children with the Flu

- Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Keep sick household members in a separate room (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. 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, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.
- Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:
 - Fast breathing or trouble breathing
 - Bluish or gray skin color
 - Not drinking enough fluids
 - Not urinating or no tears when crying

- Severe or persistent vomiting
 - Not waking up or not interacting
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Check with your doctor about any special care needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older. Have the sick household member wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
 - Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye’s syndrome
 - Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

For more information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu
- United States Health and Human Services: www.flu.gov
- St. Louis County Health Department: www.co.st-louis.mo.us/doh/
- Contact the CDC (24 hours every day) at 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
- Email with questions to cdcinfo@cdc.gov

If you have any questions regarding the contents of this packet (or anything else) please feel free to contact Laurabeth or me at the school at 314-787-1036 or at lmedlock@cpcstl.org or jroberts@cpcstl.org.

Thanks and God bless,

Rev. John Roberts
Head of School