

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology  
and Immunization Section**

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

We have begun to see an increase in influenza activity in King County. Illness clusters have appeared in schools and long-term care facilities, and there are increasing numbers of cases being reported at local hospitals and clinics. Many schools have been seeing an increased rate of absenteeism for febrile illnesses associated with muscle and body aches, fatigue, coughing, and sore throat.

If your child gets sick with the symptoms listed above, please keep him/her home from school. Best treatments for influenza-like illnesses include rest and ensuring that your child gets plenty of fluids. Fever-reducing medication (Tylenol, ibuprofen) can bring down fever and might help your child feel more comfortable (discuss with your healthcare provider). Please keep your child home from school and other public gatherings until he/she has not had a fever and has not taken any fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours. Children with asthma should be sure to take their medications as prescribed and have an asthma control plan with their healthcare provider for use during infections and when asthma worsens.

In addition to staying home when sick, information on other ways to prevent the spread of respiratory infections include:

- Covering the mouth and nose with tissue when coughing and sneezing. If you don't have tissue, cough and sneeze into your sleeve.
- Wash hands for at least 10 seconds with soap and water.
- Wash hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom and before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- If water is not available to wash hands, use an alcohol-based gel or wipe.

Also, it is not too late to get a flu shot! The vaccine covers up to four strains of this year's circulating influenza viruses and remains the best way to prevent the flu. We recommend all persons 6 months and older be vaccinated. Although recent reports have described possible reduced protection from this year's vaccine, some protection is better than no protection and the season may be a severe one based on current information about the circulating influenza viruses.

Please contact your child's health care provider if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Krista Rietberg, MPH  
Epidemiologist  
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