

## ***Important Health Information about School, Flu & You***

September 4, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian,

A new strain of flu virus called H1N1 (also called Swine Flu) has become a world-wide health concern. As we begin a new school year, ***we need your help*** to keep our students and staff healthy. The best way to protect people from the flu and other illnesses is to keep sick people away from healthy people. As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. ***If your child or children are sick, they should be kept home from school. Please check your child every morning before sending him or her to school.*** The Wachusett Regional School District is taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in our buildings. We want to keep the schools open and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. Here are a few things families can do to help:

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.
- **Teach your children to cover coughs or sneezes** using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home at least 24 hours after they are free from signs of a fever WITHOUT the use of fever-reducing medications (medications containing acetaminophen or ibuprofen).** Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will* be sent home.
- ***If symptoms worsen or persist, call your medical care provider.***

***The health and safety of your child is our number one priority.*** School nurses will be monitoring for influenza-like illness in our schools. If your child comes to school with the symptoms of flu as described above, or if your child develops these symptoms once in school, your child will be sent home and will be expected to remain out of school until symptoms are gone for 24 hours.

We know that keeping a child home can be disruptive to work and activity schedules, so:

- Plan now to assure that your child is safe at home and has care when they are sick.
- Do not send them to another child care setting where they could make others sick.
- Do not allow them to go to shopping centers, malls, restaurants, movies, etc.
- Do not allow them to visit with friends or attend sporting events or other extra-curricular activities.

**If the flu becomes more severe**, we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school,
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips, and
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick.

See reverse side of this letter for ***Additional Information and References.***

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter and for helping us to keep our schools as healthy as possible for all students and staff.

Sincerely,

Tony Cipro

Principal

## ***Additional Information and References***

H1N1 flu is a serious illness. Guidance may change depending on the severity and amount of flu cases that develop. We will keep you informed as new information becomes available. Frequent updates are available online:

- Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/dph>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>
- United States Health and Human Services website: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: <http://www.doe.mass.edu>

<b>If your child has:</b>	<b>Then:</b>
<p>Fever (100°F or 37.8°C) <b>AND</b> sore throat or cough</p> <p><i>Your child might have the flu. Other symptoms include runny or stuffy nose, body aches, fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea.</i></p>	<p>Keep your child home from school and child care until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (once they have stopped taking fever-reducing medicine).</p> <p>Medicines that contain acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) can reduce fever and relieve pain. As the sick person begins to feel better, you may decide to stop giving them fever-reducing medicines. Continue to monitor their temperature until it has been normal (98.7 F or 37 C) for 24 hours. Aspirin should NOT be given to children or teenagers as this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.</p>

<b>If your child has:</b>	<b>Then:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever alone, OR</li> <li>• Vomiting or diarrhea, OR</li> <li>• Sore throat or new cough with no fever</li> </ul>	<p>Keep your child home from school and child care until non-fever symptoms are gone for 24 hours. If fever is present, follow guidance in box above.</p>