

What can I do to keep my child from getting sick?

It is important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and how to protect others from becoming infected. If we all practice good hygiene, we can limit the spread of flu in our schools.

- **Get your child both the H1N1 and seasonal flu shots.** Vaccination is the best way to keep your child from getting the flu.
- **Teach your children to wash their hands often.** Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
- **Teach your children to use hand sanitizer.** Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Watch small children using gels so they don’t swallow it.
- **Teach your children to cough or sneeze into their elbow-not their hands!** Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. They should wash their hands after blowing their nose or coughing into a tissue.
- **Teach your children to avoid touching their nose, mouth, or eyes.** They should keep their hands away from their face.

What is the flu?

The flu is a very contagious disease of the respiratory (breathing) system. The flu is easily passed from one person to another by coughing and sneezing. It is usually very unpleasant, but for most people symptoms generally get better after 7 –10 days. The flu usually starts very **suddenly** with:

- fever 100.4° or more lasting 3 – 4 days
- headache
- severe muscle aches
- general weakness/extreme fatigue

These symptoms are accompanied by:

- dry cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose

What to do if you have the flu:

- **Keep your child home:** It is **very** important that your child does not go to school or other places where they could spread the flu virus to other people, such as group childcare, after school programs, the mall, or sporting events.
- Rest in bed

- Drink lots of fluids
- Call your child's school to notify them that your child is sick, and tell the school nurse if your child has flu-like symptoms.
- Take non-aspirin pain relievers such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®, Motrin®, etc.). Children and teens with the flu should never take aspirin as they may develop a rare, but serious disease called Reye syndrome

When should you see a health care provider?

You should see a health care provider or go to an emergency room **immediately** if you have any of the symptoms below:

- Severe or prolonged flu symptoms
- Rapid or labored breathing or bluish skin
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Pain or difficulty breathing
- So irritable they do not want to be held
- Becoming sick again with fever and/or a worse cough after flu symptoms have improved
- Cough with yellow sputum or phlegm
- Not waking up; not interacting with others

For more information about influenza visit, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/> or <http://www.state.ma.us/dph/> or call the Massachusetts Immunization Program at 617-983-6800 or 888-658-2850.