

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

December 4, 2015

Dear Principal or Administrator:

The 2015-16 flu season has begun in Florida. Flu activity levels are increasing across the state, including in children. Increased flu activity in children regularly comes ahead of increased activity in all other age groups. The single best way to protect against seasonal flu and its potential severe complications is for children to get a seasonal influenza vaccine each year. **Please send a letter home to parents encouraging vaccination.**

People infected with influenza are most infectious to others early in their course of illness. This means it is **important to review school illness exclusion policies with staff, teachers and parents to ensure children sick with flu are rapidly identified and to ensure parents keep children home when they are sick.**

The flu vaccine is safe and continues to be the best way to protect your staff, your students, and their families from the flu. The national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that all individuals six months of age and older receive the flu vaccine each year.

The Department urges schools to help fight the spread of influenza by:

- **Sending a letter to parents encouraging influenza vaccination** (sample letter provided), as well as, "The Flu: a Guide for Parents" fact sheet found here:
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/a_flu_guide_for_parents.pdf
 - Parents and staff can check with their physician, your local health department or visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/flu-prevention/locate-a-flu-shot.html> to search for a flu vaccine location.
- **Ensuring rapid identification of sick students, teachers and staff and ensuring they stay home when they are sick.**
- Covering noses and mouths with tissue when you cough or sneeze. Students, teachers and staff should wash their hands often using soap and warm water.
- Encouraging students, teachers and staff to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Cleaning and disinfect commonly handled surfaces or objects.

For more information on preventing the flu, as well as, specific materials and tools for schools, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>. Please contact your local county health department with any questions and report any suspected influenza outbreaks to your county health department right away. Thank you for your important contribution to protecting the health of those in the community you serve.

Sincerely,

Anna Marie Likos, MD, MPH
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Florida Department of Health

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