

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT TALKING POINTS For Elementary School Principals

Some of you have already provided information about the seasonal and H1N1 influenza to parents as part of your back-to-school nights. We are asking that those who have back-to-school nights scheduled during the next several weeks include a brief influenza presentation to parents.

- Health officials anticipate more illness from the new H1N1 influenza than experienced last spring and more school-based outbreaks because influenza is typically transmitted more easily in fall and winter.
- In situations involving health issues, the Howard County Health Department serves as the lead agency. Howard County schools are following the guidance provided by health officials.
- The new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the local Health Department is designed to decrease the spread of **regular seasonal flu** and the **new H1N1 flu** while limiting the disruption of day-to-day activities and learning that goes on in schools.

Regular Seasonal Flu

- Information about protecting your child against seasonal flu with a nasal spray flu vaccine called FluMist® was sent home recently with your child.
- The Howard County Health Department in partnership with the HCPSS and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene hoped to offer Seasonal Flu Vaccination in all Howard County Public School Elementary students on September 22 and 24.
- We have recently learned that vaccine may not be available due to nationwide production and distribution challenges.
- Twelve HCPSS elementary schools will administer the FluMist on the scheduled dates of September 22 and 24.
- Other schools will be scheduled and parents notified as quickly as possible as shipments of vaccine are received.
- Families may also check with their family doctor or pediatrician regarding availability of vaccine for their child.

H1N1 Influenza Procedures

- Students with influenza-like symptoms (fever 100°F or higher, cough or sore throat) will be sent home and must remain home until they are fever free without medication for 24 hours.

- Parents are asked to contact the school on the first day their child is absent with flu-like symptoms. At the request of state and local health officials, schools are collecting more information from parents about specific symptoms when absences are reported. This information will be reported to the health department. Parents may call _____ or email _____ to provide this information.
- Health assistants and nurses will be wearing facemasks when evaluating students/staff with influenza-like illness. The CDC and the Health Department do not recommend that well students wear masks, however schools will not prohibit students from wearing masks.
- The vaccine for H1N1 is under development and should be available by the end of October. The school system and the Health Department are collaborating on plans to offer the vaccine to all school-aged children.
- School staff will continue to encourage prevention measures that have been communicated to students over the past several years:
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water. If water is not near, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
 - Refrain from touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Most importantly, if you are sick, stay home.
 - Get a flu vaccination each year.
- School officials will post H1N1 updates on the school system website, www.hcpss.org, and will continue to share information with parents through HCPSS News