

# Reducing the Spread of Influenza in the School Setting

Influenza activity remains high in Kent County. As children return to school from winter break, it is extremely important for Kent County schools to help reduce the spread of influenza by being vigilant about keeping students and staff out of school when they are sick. As such, school staff must be able to recognize symptoms of influenza and understand what to do in order to limit transmission in the school setting. This document from the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) provides information on the symptoms of influenza, steps schools can take to limit contact with ill students and staff, and who to contact if large numbers of students and/or staff become ill.

## *Influenza Symptoms*

School personnel should suspect influenza illness in individuals showing any two (2) of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100 °F (37.8 °C) or greater
- Cough
- Runny Nose (that can't be explained by allergies)
- Sore Throat

## *Separating Ill Students and Staff*

School staff and parents of students should be made aware of the symptoms of influenza and should be encouraged to keep themselves or their children out of school if they experience these symptoms. Staff and students should be kept out of school until they are **fever-free for 24 hours** (without the aid of fever-reducing medication).

Schools should consider the following in order to properly manage staff or students who become ill during the school day to limit exposure to others:

- Early identification of individuals who can cover for staff in the event that they become ill and need to go home.
- Identification of a room where sick students can be located while waiting to be picked up from school.
  - Should not be a room used for other activities
  - Should not be a room through which many people pass
  - Ideally, six (6) feet of space should be available between ill person and others
- Designation of staff to tend to sick children while they wait to go home.
  - These individuals ideally should have limited interaction with other students and staff
  - Individuals should not be at increased risk for influenza complications and should have knowledge of infection control recommendations
- If available, consider the use of masks for sick individuals and those who care for them in the school setting.

## *Reporting Clusters of Illness*

If your school experiences increased numbers of students/staff who are absent or unusually high numbers of students/staff becoming ill at school, the Communicable Disease staff at KCHD can provide recommendations for addressing the situation or determining the need for school dismissal. KCHD staff can be contacted by calling **616-632-7228**.

