



## **RCSD Health Services Influenza (Flu) Fact Sheet**

### **What is the flu?**

The "flu" or influenza is a serious disease. It is contagious and spreads in the U.S. each year, starting in the fall and continuing through spring. The flu is caused by a virus and is spread mainly by coughing, sneezing or close contact. Young children and older adults are at highest risk of getting the flu but anyone can catch it.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Unlike a cold, flu symptoms start suddenly. They appear about 1-4 days after a person is exposed to the flu. Symptoms may include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Some people may have vomiting or diarrhea; this is more common in children

If your child has any of the above symptoms, please call your child's healthcare provider for guidance.

### **How long is a person with the flu contagious?**

You can pass the flu to others from 1 day before you have symptoms to up to 5-7 days after you get sick.

### **Is there treatment?**

The flu can be treated with antiviral drugs if started soon after you get sick. They will help reduce how sick you get and how long you are ill. People with the flu need rest and fluids. Please discuss all treatment options with your medical provider.

### **If my child or another family member has been exposed, what should I do?**

Call your doctor or clinic for advice. Some people with a sick family member may be given an antiviral medicine to help prevent them from catching the flu.

### **Who's at higher risk for the flu?**

Young children, older adults and people with weaker immune symptoms sometimes become sicker from the flu. This is also true if you have a condition such as heart and lung disease, asthma or diabetes. Pregnant women should consult with their medical provider.

### **What is the best way to prevent flu?**

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get the flu vaccine. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get the flu vaccine every year. It is not too late to get vaccinated. Many pharmacies offer vaccinations, or contact your healthcare provider. Flu vaccines cannot cause the flu.

### **RCSD Illness Policy**

Please remember that it is RCSD policy for a child to remain at home for at least 24 hours after they have vomited, and 24 hours after the START of antibiotics for strep throat, regardless of whether or not they are feeling better before that time. A child MUST be free from fever for 24 hours without the use of Tylenol &/or ibuprofen.

### **Wash Your Hands Well**

We recommended that you review good hand-washing techniques with your child and encourage them to wash their hands frequently at home and at school.

Good hand washing takes 20 seconds: Sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice while you wash • Scrub with soap and water to remove germs • Clean your hands and all of your fingers • Always wash hands before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, spending time outside

### **Additional Sources of Flu Information**

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) would like you to know that information regarding influenza and the benefits of influenza immunizations is free, accessible and available in different languages from several organizations:

- New York State Department of Health:  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/childhood\\_adolescent/](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/childhood_adolescent/)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/freeresources/print/index.htm>
- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:  
<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/flu-seasonal.page>