

Dear Parents,

South Carolina is experiencing an early and large rise in seasonal influenza (flu) cases. Flu is different from the common cold. It can cause fever, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, and vomiting. Flu can be very serious and may even cause death in some people with chronic health conditions, young children, pregnant women, or elderly persons.

Flu spreads between people when those sick with the flu cough, sneeze, or even talk. The flu virus can be spread to people up to six feet away. Flu can also be spread when people touch their faces or eyes after touching something that a sick person has touched.

Flu vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu. The Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) strongly recommends that all children 6 months and older be vaccinated as soon as possible to prevent the flu.

DHEC also recommends several other ways to prevent spreading the flu:

- Wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Keep children home from school if they have the flu so they don't infect others. Children who have the flu may return to school 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees F, measured by mouth) or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your upper sleeve or elbow, rather than your hands.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Lastly, if you or your children develop symptoms of the flu, seek medical care.

More information about the flu is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or DHEC websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

<http://www.dhec.sc.gov/flu/>

Thank you,

School Administrator