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# St. Mary's County Public Schools

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Dear Parents, Students, and Staff:

As we begin this school year, I would like to take a moment to share with you the latest information I have received from our state and local public health officials regarding the H1N1 Flu. To date, there have been no cases of H1N1 Flu in St. Mary's County Public Schools. I realize that many people are worried, and I hope this letter will help address your concerns.

Our building service workers routinely clean classrooms, general use areas, and restrooms and water fountains using state approved disinfectants. We will continue to provide 60 percent alcohol based hand sanitizers to each school and administrative office for visitors, staff, and students to clean their hands if they do not have access to soap and water. Staff and visitors should wash their hands upon arrival to the school building.

Our school nurses will continue to reinforce the importance of proper hand washing and covering your cough. Any student who appears ill will be sent to the school nurse for evaluation and sent home, if appropriate. Finally, we are in close communication with the St. Mary's County Health Department to collaborate with them and to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff.

The attached document provides further information related to precautions being taken in St. Mary's County Public Schools. The health and well-being of our students and staff is our top priority, and we are doing everything necessary to address any H1N1 Flu concerns. For more information, please contact the St. Mary's County Health Department at 301-475-4330.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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Attachment



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE H1N1 FLU

### **Is it safe for my child to go to school?**

At this time, state and local public health officials have advised that students should continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick and do not have flu symptoms. Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100.4 degrees F), cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may be experienced with H1N1 Flu, including body aches, feeling very tired, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

### **What should I do if my child is sick?**

Flu spreads easily. If you think your child is getting the flu, it is very important that he/she does not go to school or other places where they might make other people sick, such as group childcare, after school programs, the mall, or sporting events. Call your doctor's office and let him/her know your child's symptoms and history. Your doctor will advise you whether you should come to the office. When you notify the school that your child is sick, please tell the school nurse if he/she has flu like symptoms. Keep the school nurse updated on your child's medical condition.

### **What can I do to keep my child from getting sick?**

It is very important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and how to protect others from becoming infected. Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and hot water for 20 seconds. Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. All individuals with flu-like symptoms should stay at home for seven days, or 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away or whichever period is longer. Dispose of hand wipes properly. Teach your children to cough or sneeze into their sleeve, not their hands. Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbows. They should wash their hands after blowing their nose or coughing into a tissue. Teach your children to avoid touching their nose, mouth, or eyes. They should keep their hands away from their face.

### **Will my child's school be closed if there is a case of H1N1 Flu?**

The decision to close a school will be made locally. The Superintendent of St. Mary's County Public Schools will work closely with our local and State public health officials in monitoring attendance rates and clusters of illness. Information will be provided to staff, students and parents as soon as possible if a school must be closed.

### **How can I keep track of what is going on in my community?**

Stay informed by getting up-to-date information on H1N1 Flu and what you can do to keep your family healthy from the Centers for Disease Control website, [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/). Contact your local health department at 301-475-4330 for updates.

### **What precautions are being taken at schools?**

Careful hand washing is very important in preventing the spread of disease, including the H1N1 Flu. School nurses have been and will continue to conduct hand washing/cover your cough education programs. All school nurses, supporting services staff, principals, and school staff are working to prevent H1N1 Flu through proactive steps, communication, and universal precautions. School nurses are tracking communicable disease trends so that potential public health issues can be identified quickly. They continue to work closely with local and state public health authorities as questions arise.