



DR. MICHAEL J. MARTIRANO
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St. Mary's County Public Schools

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October 13, 2009

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Teachers, Staff, and Community Members:

The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed of developments concerning the H1N1 influenza. Recently, a number of students within St. Mary's County Public Schools have exhibited influenza-like illness (ILI). We are receiving information from health care providers and parents reporting positive cases of Influenza Type A at numerous schools. Although Influenza Type A may or may not be H1N1, physicians often make a clinical diagnosis based on signs and symptoms. The St. Mary's County Health Department has reported some confirmed H1N1 cases in St. Mary's County and St. Mary's County Public Schools.

Administrators and school nurses are closely monitoring daily attendance and students who visit the health room with ILI. Students who have become ill at school with ILI symptoms will be evaluated by the school nurse and sent home as appropriate. We continue to work closely with the St. Mary's County Health Department to ensure every precaution has been taken to maintain the health and safety of our students and staff.

It is important that you closely monitor your child's health, and it is vital that you keep him/her home from school should they exhibit any flu-like symptoms. Symptoms of the flu include temperature of 100 degrees or more, cough, upper respiratory infection, sore throat, muscle aches, and headaches. We are asking any students or staff experiencing two or more of these symptoms to contact their health care provider and report the illness or symptoms to the school nurse. Infants, toddlers, pregnant women, seniors, and people with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk of severe illness or complication from influenza, and should consult with their primary care physician if they develop symptoms of influenza. Students and staff with a temperature of 100 degrees or greater are asked to stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever reducing medication.

Consent forms for the H1N1 flu vaccine were sent home last week. The forms are also available on the St. Mary's County Public Schools' website at www.smcps.org. Please review the packet sent home, complete the consent form, and return the form to the school nurse as soon as possible if you would like your child to receive the H1N1 vaccine.

The safety and well being of our students and staff is our top priority, and we continue to work closely with the St. Mary's County Health Department to limit the spread of influenza. Good health and hygiene are essential to ensure effective learning. We recommend everyone continue with the following measures: frequent hand washing and covering nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or if a tissue is not available, coughing/sneezing into your shirt sleeve or elbow.

Updated information will be made available as we continue to monitor the H1N1 virus. Please contact the St. Mary's County Health Department at 301-475-4330; Trish Wince, Supervisor of Health Services for St. Mary's County Public Schools, at 301-475-5511, option 2; or your child's school nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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