

Flu Facts

February School Health Newsletter

Local rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) continue to rise. They're already higher than in the past few years with weeks of flu season still expected. We understand many families are concerned, so here are a few flu facts to keep you in the loop.

ILI, which is a fever of 100 degrees or more and cough or sore throat, is how disease trackers measure the flu nationwide. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health posts a weekly flu update on their blog most Fridays with the latest information about how ILI rates are looking in the state.

<http://blog.mass.gov/publichealth/>

It remains important for families to keep sick kids at home, in accordance with school policy. Students cannot return to school until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours, without medication like Tylenol, Advil or Motrin. These guidelines are also good common sense for adults in the workplace. The checklist below can help families determine when to stay home and when to return to school or work.

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/07/xb/flu-symptom-check-list.pdf>

The Newton school nurses continue to monitor illness in the schools and are available for any questions or concerns. It may seem elementary, but in conjunction with a flu vaccine, thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent all kinds of illness including the flu.

How to wash your hands:

- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs and might not remove harmful chemicals.

Flu vaccination for all people age 6 months and older continues to be recommended. It's not too late get a flu shot. Visit www.newtonma.gov/flu or call 617-796-1420 to find out when the next flu shot opportunity is with the public health nurse at City Hall.

Some information adapted from www.CDC.gov/handwashing and www.mass.gov/dph/flu