



FLU INFORMATION

September 17, 2009

Mayor Sexton held a 'Flu Season Meeting' at Village Hall on September 10. Miss Conroy heard from a panel of experts from Little Company of Mary Hospital and a representative from the Cook County Board of Health. Several websites were recommended for accurate information.

1. www.flu.gov
2. www.cookcountypublichealth.org
3. www.cdc.gov
4. A soon to be posted site through Little Company of Mary Hospital

SEASONAL FLU

Flu season in the United States usually occurs between October and April, when many people are indoors for extended periods of time. The air is drier, allowing for viruses to remain suspended for longer periods of time. Most infection occurs from airborne viruses; fewer from contact with surfaces that have the virus. When an infected person sneezes or coughs, the virus can remain airborne for as long as 2 hours.

NOVEL H1N1: THE NEW FLU

This past April, when our flu season should have been ending, we saw a new flu virus. This 'novel' H1N1 Flu began spreading in the United States and around the world and continued through the summer months. Unlike seasonal flu, Novel H1N1 Flu has affected more people under the age of 25, and fewer people over the age of 60.

While medical information is provided on websites, it is important for families to be aware of the information specific to schools.

- It is recommended that everyone get a seasonal flu vaccine now. These are available at many locations (e.g. Walgreens, CVS) but it is advisable for families to consult with their physicians prior to getting vaccinated.
- And get the H1N1 vaccine, when it becomes available in October. Pregnant women, children between the ages of 6 months and 18, and healthcare workers will have access to the vaccine first. The second group to have access to the vaccine includes childcare providers and college students. If there is vaccine remaining after these groups have received it, all other people will be eligible to get vaccinated.
- The Cook County Board of Public Health will offer to vaccinate children in schools. Parental permission will be sought first and no child will be vaccinated without parental consent.

CHILDREN WITH ANY TYPE OF FLU...

- ... are to remain at home and rest to ensure their recoveries and that they don't spread the flu to others at school. (Full recovery typically takes 3-5 days.)**
- ... are to remain home from school for at least 24 hours after their fevers are gone. (A fever is defined as 100°F.)**
- ... must be fever-free without them having taken a fever-reducing medicine! (Children are often sent back to school without fevers and then temperatures spike again when the medicine wears-off.)**
- ... should remain at home until their digestive systems stabilize, if vomiting and/or diarrhea occurred during illness. Be sure they are tolerating food normally so they don't become weakened at school.**

MHR typically sees a rise in absences among students during January and February. It is not anticipated that school will close due to cases of flu, as long as we aren't experiencing anything out of the ordinary. Recall that St. John Fisher School had to close for a few days last February; that was because more than 10% of their students were sick, combined with a high number of absences among the faculty. The rule of thumb is to remain open as long as the school is able to function meaningfully.