



# H1N1 UPDATE

## OCTOBER 25, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in Most Holy Redeemer School. We want to keep the school open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

I review news from the Centers for Disease Control, Illinois State Board of Education, Cook County Health Department and the Office of Catholic Schools to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning MHR. Currently, we are experiencing higher-than-normal absenteeism *for this time of the school year*, but absenteeism is not as high as is typical during the winter (our peak months). We have always had the benefit of daily cleaning of common areas, and every-other-day cleaning of classrooms; anyone visiting the school after 1:00 p.m. can attest to Mr. Dino's thorough disinfection of common areas. SafeSpace® Disinfectant Room Defogger will be used in classrooms (for more information on any SafeSpace® Sanitizing Product, please visit [www.safespaceco.com](http://www.safespaceco.com)) to kill germs in the air, and teachers use disinfecting wipes on desks and handles.

**If the flu becomes more severe,** we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school;
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips;
- having students eat lunch in their classrooms rather than the lunchroom;
- keeping school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days from the time a household member became sick; and
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick.

For now we are doing everything we can to keep our school functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself. *Be sure to caution children not to ingest hand sanitizers!*
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100°), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected. Remember: students missing school for any reason cannot participate in any aspect of the MHR athletic program—this will prevent the spread of flu to teammates and players from other schools.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home.*

If your child has the H1N1 flu now or becomes sick, DO NOT concern yourselves with making-up schoolwork! Children with this flu are too sick to be concerned about anything but getting well—focus your attention on your child's health. When students return to school, our teachers will work with students to catch-up on only the most critical work; they will not be responsible for the same written work as their flu-free classmates.

For more information, see the attached flyer (parentsfactsheet2.pdf) and visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. I'll continue to keep you posted about our circumstances and share any information from government agencies and/or the Office of Catholic Schools.

Sincerely,

Loretta Conroy, Principal

## Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
2. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, parents should consider the following steps:

- ▶ **Extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
- ▶ **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days** from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- ▶ Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- ▶ Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.



- ▶ Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- ▶ Update emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.
- ▶ Talk to your school administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

### For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
  - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
  - TTY: (888) 232-6348
  - [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)