



St. Charles County Government

Department of Community Health and the Environment

Gil Copley, Director

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Many of you have expressed concern about H1N1 influenza and seasonal flu and what plans may be in place to help you protect your children. Let me reassure you that the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment has been actively working with local schools and other community partners to develop plans that will help protect your children and our community. We are working to carefully balance the risks of illness in our community with the benefits of maintaining routines that allow children to learn and thrive in a healthy school environment.

You play an important role in how the flu affects our community and can help us slow the spread of a flu virus in our community. Rather than waiting for flu season to begin this fall, we recommend you start now planning to protect your family and our community as we "Fight the Flu" together.

The best way to protect your family against flu is with a **vaccination**. We encourage you to get your family members vaccinated as soon as possible against seasonal flu. This will offer protection against at least three flu viruses expected to circulate in our community this year. In addition, vaccine for H1N1 flu, also called swine flu, is expected to be available later this year. Plans to offer this vaccine are still being finalized, and our department will notify you when and where the shots will be available in St. Charles County.

In addition to vaccinations, **good hand washing** is a proven disease prevention method against flu and other illnesses. Make it a family habit to wash your hands vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Do this frequently throughout the day, especially before eating or drinking, after using the bathroom, or after coughing or sneezing. Also, **try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth** and stay at least **six feet away** from people who are sick with flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, runny nose, or fever.

One of the most important things you can do to keep our community healthy is to **stay home when you are sick**, and keep your children home if they have a fever. Anyone with flu-like symptoms, including a fever of 100°F, should stay home from work, school, or daycare until they have been without a fever for at least 24 hours. Please do not give your children fever-reducing medication and then send them to school or daycare. This allows viruses to spread quickly throughout our community.

When **caring for a sick family member at home**, put them in a room to themselves. Have only one person provide care, if possible. That person should try to avoid being directly face-to-face with the sick person, and they should wash their hands frequently with soap and water. Encourage the sick person to wash their hands frequently, cover their cough or sneeze, and refrain from sharing personal items. Most people will feel better within a few days, but should not return to work, school, or daycare until they have been without a fever for at least 24 hours.

We understand that you are concerned about H1N1 influenza. We are working diligently to address your concerns as we learn more about this new virus. Please check our website, www.scchealth.org, for updates. We encourage you to follow the guidance in this letter, as well as other information provided by the health department and its partners. Together we can work to "Fight the Flu" and keep our families and our community healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Gil Copley
Director