

Dear Christ the King School Families,

I want to share the information that I am receiving from the Health Department, Center for Disease Control and our families regarding the illnesses that are present in our school. Recently we have had students diagnosed with sinus infections, Strep throat and influenza Type A.

I learned from the Health Department that there are two general categories of influenza (flu) ---Type A and Type B. Most seasonal influenza cases that students contract are a form of Type A and we usually see occurrences during winter months. A new influenza (flu) strain is spreading around the world which is also Type A and this has been categorized as H1N1, popularly known as "Swine flu." Last year, the procedure was for doctors and hospitals to send off flu samples to confirm that a person had this specific designation of influenza. Furthermore, schools were required to close for at least two weeks. However, this year governing agencies have changed their procedures and recommendations.

According to Dr. Moore at the State Health Department, they are seeing cases of influenza early in the population. Since it is too early for the seasonal flu strains, it is assumed with high confidence that the designation of the Type A flu cases is H1N1. Doctors and health facilities are not expected and in fact are encouraged to not send in sample for a confirmatory diagnosis. Many have been told their child has H1N1 but we have no confirmed cases from the State Department. Even if there is a strong possibility of H1N1, schools are no longer mandated to close. In fact, Dr. Moore stated that they are less concerned about the diagnosis and are more focused on the prevention and treatment of the influenza Type A. The recommendation is to treat any case of the influenza the same way, no matter the designation: fluids, rest and avoidance of situations that will spread illness.

To maintain a healthy environment for all students, we are requiring students to do regular hand-washing, sanitizing classrooms and common areas as well as not allowing students to share items such as water bottles. We are also requiring students to wash after coughing and sneezing as well as educating them that sneezing into the elbow or tissue prevents the spread of germs. We have also doubled our efforts to keep the school sanitized.

We ask your help in also screening and preventing further spread of illnesses. At home, we ask you to reinforce and promote good health habits like washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home when sick. In addition, we ask that all students receive the seasonal flu vaccine when it is available. We are working with the Parish Nursing Program to potentially provide vaccines at school. However, local pharmacies as well as doctors' offices may have supplies before us.

According to the State Department of Health, most people who get the flu recover without any treatment or special care. Therefore, they recommend that the same treatment plan be used for all types of influenza A, including H1N1. I have not heard a consistent report as to whether or not Tamiflu is recommended. That is a decision to discuss with your health care provider. At this point, there is no need for a doctor's note for a return. If together, we follow the guidelines, we can prevent having to close the school or providing stricter guidelines regarding week long mandatory absences that may not be needed.

**For ALL children and adults who develop a fever of at least 99.9 degrees F and respiratory symptoms (unless you know the cause and it is not influenza), we are using the following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

- **Students and staff who are well may attend school, even if others are sick**
- **If your student develops the following symptoms, they must stay home: fever and respiratory symptoms such as coughing, runny nose, congestion, and sore throat. Other symptoms are fatigue, muscle aches, headache, nausea, vomiting, and**

diarrhea. Not all of these need to be present—if your child is not their usual self, please keep them home.

- **Students should stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours WITHOUT the use of fever reducing medications such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen.**
- **Students or staff members who become ill at school will be separated from others and parents of students will be called for immediate pick up.**
- **During the days of absence from school, sick students should not risk infecting others and may not attend gatherings such as games, practices, meetings, etc. Students should also not visit friends or go to other schools.**

Teachers are asked to watch children and any child not appearing well will be sent to the office for a temperature and throat check. **Please note that any child sent home from school should not come back the next school day but should stay home until the following day at a minimum. I prefer that you err on the side of caution. We are finding that the cycle of the illness runs three to five days so if your child's fever breaks, please do not send them until after 24 hours from when the fever breaks WITHOUT medicine, NOT 24 hours after they have been sent home from school.** Even if your child feels better, we are seeing that students are coming back too early and then having to go home again a few hours later or the next day. In the meantime, the spread of illness is occurring and impacting others in the community.

Parents are urged to make plans NOW for child care. At this point we are not closing the school unless we are unable to maintain learning for the majority of our students or a significant number of faculty members are absent. If there is a closure, we will have plans on how to make up work or to provide learning on-line so that we can continue our teaching and learning. However, we are trying to avoid closing school and can do so if we all take responsibility for keeping our community healthy.

Our Labor Day holiday is the best time for us to regroup. In addition to our stepped up daily cleaning, we will do a thorough cleaning of lockers, desks, door knobs, and other areas on Friday and then again on Monday. I know many desire to travel but please help your students to rest and relax so they will be strong for next week. It is my hope that with us all following these guidelines, all our children will be well and we can continue to provide them with a healthy learning community.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation with these guidelines and understanding that our decisions are based on the common good.

For further information, visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>.

Peace,



Christine Caron Gebhardt  
Principal