

Be aware of the symptoms of flu

Flu usually presents with sudden onset of fever (temperature over 38° C) and cough or sore throat. Other symptoms can include runny or stuffy nose, limb or joint pain, headache, vomiting or diarrhoea.

Prevent spread of flu by doing the following at all times:

1. Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Hand drying facilities at school must not be shared between people with the exception of electric hand dryers and roller towels. Staff and students may be asked to bring in and use their own individual towels.
2. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of tissues immediately as household rubbish in the normal way. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands.
3. Persons with suspected flu should remain at home for 7 days from when symptoms began.
4. The HSE recommends that you get the Pandemic H1N1 2009 flu vaccine when it is offered. It is also recommended that persons who may be at higher risk for complications from flu also get the seasonal flu vaccine.

Teachers and other school staff should take the following steps ALL the time and not only during a flu pandemic to help keep students and themselves from getting sick with flu.

- Ensure posters and signage regarding flu, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are appropriately displayed in the school.
- Remind students to practice good hand hygiene and ensure that they have the time and facilities to wash their hands as often as necessary. Younger children and those with special needs may require extra attention.
- Be a good role model by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Do not permit children to share wind instruments. Avoid sharing pens, crayons, pencils, toys/ objects where possible and if sharing them clean them before passing them between students.
- Ensure regular cleaning of surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs and keyboards with usual cleaning agents.
- Keep an eye out for students with symptoms of flu and arrange for them to go home as soon as possible. If practicable they should be sent to another room while awaiting collection.
- Staff should also stay at home if they have symptoms of flu.
- Persons who may be at higher risk for complications of flu include persons with chronic respiratory, heart, kidney, liver or neurological disease, immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment), diabetes, haemoglobinopathies, people aged 65 years and older, children under the age of 5 years (especially those less than 2 years), people on medication for asthma, those who are severely obese and pregnant women. If you are in any of these groups and you develop symptoms of flu you should speak with your doctor as people at high risk of complications can benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.

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