



Date: October 11, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The health and safety of our students is our priority. It is for this reason that Prince George County Schools is providing some important information regarding communicable diseases. This time of year, there are many illnesses that may become present including, but not limited to:

- Common cold, coughs, and sore throats
- Flu, or flu-like illness
- Viral gastroenteritis such as Norovirus
- Enterovirus

Common Cold

A cold usually includes a runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, sneezing, coughing, watery eyes, mild headache, mild body aches. These symptoms can last for up to two weeks. Over 200 viruses can cause the common cold. The rhinovirus is the most common type of virus that causes colds.

See a Healthcare Provider if you or Your Child has:

- Temperature higher than 100.4° F
- Symptoms that last more than 10 days
- Symptoms that are not relieved by over-the-counter medicines

Your healthcare provider can determine if you or your child has a cold and can recommend symptomatic therapy. If your child is younger than three months of age and has a fever, it's important to always call your healthcare provider right away. **Suggestions for preventing the common cold include the practice good hand washing and to avoid close contact with people who have colds or other upper respiratory infections**

Influenza

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms: Fever* or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (very tired), some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is

more common in children than adults. Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

To protect against the flu, the first and most important thing you can do is to get a flu vaccine for yourself and your child. Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. Other recommendations are to:

- cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue
- throw the tissue in the trash after you use it
- stay away from people who are sick
- **wash hands often with soap and water.** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

What can I do if my child gets the flu?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's Flu illness.

If your child is 5 years and older and does not have other health problems and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child is younger than 5 years (and especially younger than 2 years) or of any age with a long term health condition (like asthma, a neurological condition, or diabetes, for example) and develops flu-like symptoms, ask a doctor if your child should be examined.

Norovirus

The most common symptoms of Norovirus include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. Sometimes people have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of tiredness. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting 1 to 3 days. Sometimes people are unable to drink enough liquids to replace what they lose from vomiting and diarrhea and they can become dehydrated and need to see a doctor.

Those with Norovirus symptoms are contagious from the moment they feel ill to at least 3 days after the vomiting and diarrhea has stopped, and sometimes up to 12 days later. If your child is ill with these symptoms, please keep your child home for at least 24 hours after all diarrhea and vomiting has stopped to prevent the spread of this virus in the school. **The single most effective measure to prevent the spread of the virus is frequent hand washing with warm water and soap, especially after using the restroom and before eating or preparing food.**

Enterovirus (EV-D68)

Every year, millions of children in the United States catch Enteroviruses that can cause coughing, sneezing, and fever. This year, the Enterovirus that is most commonly causing respiratory illness in children across the country is enterovirus-D68 (EV-D68). Enterovirus (EV-D68) can cause mild to severe respiratory illness. Mild symptoms may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, and body and muscle aches. Severe symptoms may include wheezing and

difficulty breathing. Call your child's doctor if he or she is having difficulty breathing, if you feel you are unable to control symptoms, or if symptoms are getting worse. To help avoid catching and spreading EV-D68, parents and children should always follow basic steps to stay healthy:

- **Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Washing hands correctly is the most important thing you can do to stay healthy.**
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils, with people who are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or shirt sleeve, not your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Stay home when you are sick and keep sick children out of school.

Illnesses during the school year

What if my child becomes sick at school?

- Your child will be seen in the school health clinic.
- Parents or guardians are encouraged to pick up a sick student within one hour of being contacted by the school. If that is not possible, parents are requested to arrange for an authorized person to pick up the student.
- If it is determined that your child has a fever or shows signs of any communicable disease, you will be contacted and requested to pick up your child and take them home.
- Please keep all contact information updated on the emergency card.

What should I do if I need to update my contact information?

- It is extremely important that school staff have the most up to date and accurate information about your child. The parent/guardian may update information on the emergency card at any time by contacting the school office.
- When parents cannot be reached, it is very important that school staff have contact information for at least two responsible adults who can be contacted in the event of an emergency. Additional adult family members or friends should be listed in the Other Contact Information section of the emergency card

What do parents/guardians need to know about keeping my child at home?

Please partner with us by following these guidelines regarding keeping your child home when they show symptoms of illness:

- If your child has a fever, please keep them home. Children should be fever free, without fever reducing medication for 24 hours prior to returning to school
- If your child has vomiting or diarrhea, please keep them home until they are symptom free for 24 hours prior to returning to school
- Seek medical attention if your child's symptoms do not improve

- **Good hygiene and hand washing practices are important year round in the control of spreading illnesses and communicable diseases. Encourage your child to wash their hands frequently, especially after toileting, before eating and not to share food with other students or classmates.**
- **Hand sanitizer usage on hands after toileting is not recommended, proper hand washing is preferred.**

If you have questions please contact the school nurse at the respective school your child attends or you may call Ms. Michelle Grate/Health Services Coordinator at (804) 733-2700 ext. 10125.

Thank you for supporting Prince George County Public Schools!

Sincerely,



Renee Williams,
Superintendent



Michelle R. Grate, RN, MHA, MPA
Health Services Coordinator