

Tackle the Flu E-Message: Schools

Flu Season is Here

School leaders play an important role in controlling the spread of the flu. Because you are in constant contact with students, you have a unique opportunity to encourage students to establish healthy habits that prevent illness throughout the year, especially during flu season.

Getting a flu vaccine is the best way to protect against all three currently circulating strains of the flu including influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2 strains), and influenza B. Annual vaccination against flu is recommended for all people six months of age and older, unless they have a condition or medical reason not to get the vaccine.

Students often take the habits they learn at school home to their families. As a result, your efforts to educate students about preventing the flu can reach far into the community. Please talk with staff and students about getting the vaccine now. By getting the flu vaccine now, individuals are not only protecting themselves from the flu, but are less likely to spread the virus to family members, co-workers and others. The flu vaccine is readily available this season in all communities.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' *Tackle the Flu* campaign resources are available to help you encourage staff and students to get a flu vaccine.

These resources include a bookmark, posters, fact sheet, sticker, coloring page and tip card and are available to you at no cost. Visit the department's web site at health.mo.gov/tacklethefluform.php or call 573.751.6124 to order.

Please consider distributing these resources to staff and students.

Controlling the Flu in School

The following guidelines can help control the spread of the flu:

- Partner with your local public health agency or other health care provider to hold a flu vaccine clinic.
- Frequent hand washing, especially before and after eating and after using the bathroom.
- Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or the inside of the elbow – not on bare hands.
- Staying home when sick.
- Surfaces and items that staff and students normally touch, such as desks, door knobs, computer keyboards, etc., should be thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis.
- Students and staff who are sick must be sent home as soon as possible. They should stay in a separate room until they can go home. Students and staff need to stay home until 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

Resources

- Tackle the Flu, flu vaccine campaign tools and materials, health.mo.gov/tacklethefluform.php
- Whack the Flu, a flu-prevention program geared toward school-age children, health.mo.gov/WHACK/
- Hand washing and infection prevention materials, health.mo.gov/PandemicInfluenza/CampaignMaterials.pdf
- General influenza information, health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/influenza

