

We are all aware that the H1N1 influenza strain is still prevalent and the potential exists for more illness in the coming months. Guilford Public Schools is working closely with the Guilford Health Department and Connecticut Department of Education to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our schools. We will communicate new information to parents and staff as needed via our ALERTNOW email system. The Health News page of our website contains a link to the Center for Disease Control and www.flu.gov with current information on the flu.

A meeting will be scheduled early this fall with representatives from Guilford Public Schools, the Guilford Health Department, Town officials, and Town emergency management personnel to discuss plans to respond to the flu.

The Center for Disease Control has issued new guidance that applies to any flu virus circulating during the 2009-2010 school year, not only H1N1 flu. Based on current flu conditions, students and staff with flu-like illness should stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (temperature over 100° without the use of medication) and flu symptoms. Flu can be easily spread from person to person. We want to keep the schools open during flu season. We need your help to do this. Families, students, and school staff can help from getting sick in these ways:

Practice good hygiene. Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing and sneezing. Alcohol-based cleaners are also effective and available in every school.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder if you don't have a tissue, not into your hands.

Stay home if you are sick. Symptoms of the flu include fever (temperature over 100° without the use of medication), cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, body aches, headache and feeling tired. Some people may vomit or have diarrhea.

Don't share personal items – drinks, water bottles, food, utensils, clothing or towels.

Additional action by Guilford Public Schools staff will include more frequent cleaning of surfaces during the school day. It is important to note that the H1N1 flu virus only lives on surfaces for two to eight hours.

If all students, staff and their families practice these steps to keep from getting sick and protecting others from getting sick with flu we hope to lessen the impact of the flu on our school district.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please visit the GPS Health News site at www.guilford.k12.ct.us/Health.dwt.php for more information.