



October 1, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we continue to implement plans for cold and flu season, it is important that we all stay informed about combating seasonal and H1N1 flu viruses that are circulating in our community, including our schools. Anne Arundel County Public Schools and the Anne Arundel County Department of Health have worked together since last spring to address both the H1N1 virus and the seasonal flu. **The fourth annual FluMist seasonal flu vaccinations for all county public elementary school students will begin October 5.** When an H1N1 flu vaccine becomes available, free H1N1 flu shot clinics will be held at locations throughout the county, including some school buildings. The H1N1 flu clinics will be for both children and adults in accordance with priority groups established by the federal Centers for Disease Control. More details about these H1N1 vaccine clinics will be released by mid-October.

Our collaboration also includes a system at county elementary schools to monitor attendance as well as the number of children sent home from school health rooms with influenza-like illness. Since the system allows school and health officials to stay on top of any emerging trends, it is not necessary to report individual cases to the Department of Health. School nurses will not diagnose or attempt to differentiate flu cases, but they will assess your child for flu-like symptoms.

Symptoms are similar for both viruses and include a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Children with a fever should remain at home until they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications). Have a family plan in case you or your children get sick and need to stay home.

It is important to understand that not every student sent home with flu-like symptoms will end up having the flu. There are many other illnesses that have the symptoms mentioned above. As always, if you are concerned about your child's illness, contact your medical provider. School-aged children who are otherwise healthy usually have a mild illness and recover without a problem. In the most serious H1N1 cases, there is usually an underlying health condition.

Both seasonal and H1N1 flu can best be combated with regular hand washing and good hygiene. Please urge your children to sneeze into their sleeves and not to share cups or utensils.

For more information about the county schools' FluMist seasonal flu vaccinations, visit the Anne Arundel County Public Schools web site, www.aacps.org. For information about community seasonal flu clinics, visit the Department of Health's web site at www.aahealth.org. Both web sites also contain additional information and resources, including links to CDC recommendations about seasonal and H1N1 flu viruses. Questions also can be directed to the Flu Information Line at 410-222-7343.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kevin M. Maxwell in black ink.

Kevin M. Maxwell, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Handwritten signature of John R. Leopold in black ink.

John R. Leopold
County Executive

Handwritten signature of Edward Van Oeveren in black ink.

Edward Van Oeveren, M.D., M.P.H.
County Health Officer