

# Influenza (Flu) in Schools

## What can schools do to prevent the spread of flu?

- Promote flu vaccination for all students, staff, and families throughout flu season.
- Be aware of flu symptoms:
  - fever
  - headache
  - fatigue
  - cough
  - sore throat
  - body aches
- Promote hand hygiene, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, and staying home when sick for both students and staff.
- Give students and staff tissues to cover coughs and sneezes as well as liquid soap, paper towels, and time to wash their hands.
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly used areas and frequently touched surfaces. Flu can remain on surfaces for up to 8 hours.
- Follow package instructions when cleaning for contact time and dilution.

## Do schools need to provide antibacterial soap?

No, regular soap is effective. Antibacterial products have not been proven to prevent the spread of infection better than regular soap.

## Should students with influenza-like illness (ILI) be excluded from school?

- Yes, students and staff with ILI should stay home from school and school activities.
  - ILI is defined as a fever (at least 100°F) and a cough or sore throat.

- Students and staff who become ill during the day should be immediately isolated from others and sent home.
- Students and staff can return to school 24 hours after their fever is gone without fever-reducing medication, (e.g., Tylenol or Advil). They should also be well enough to participate in school before returning.

## Should schools close due to flu?

We do not recommend closing schools to prevent flu transmission. However, schools may choose to close or dismiss students if a large number of absences prevent normal school functioning.

## When should schools report influenza-like illness (ILI)?

All K-12 schools should report to the Minnesota Department of Health throughout the school year when they reach these thresholds:

- For all schools, including elementary: Report when 5 percent or more of the total school enrollment is absent with ILI, or
- For elementary schools only: Report if three students from one classroom are sent home or absent with ILI on a given day.

Schools do not need to report subsequent days of the same outbreak. An outbreak is considered over when ILI activity goes below the threshold for at least three weeks. Report a new outbreak if you reach the threshold again after a minimum of three weeks. Individual cases of lab-confirmed flu do not need to be reported.

Reporting instructions and forms are at [Influenza Surveillance Protocol and Frequently Asked Questions for Minnesota Schools](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html) ([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html)).

## Influenza-like Illness\* Report Form – Minnesota Schools 2017-18

\*Influenza-like illness (ILI) is defined as a fever of 100.0°F or greater and cough or sore throat (in the absence of a known disease other than influenza).

### When to report

Please report each day throughout the school year when you reach these thresholds:

- For all schools (including elementary):** The number of students with ILI who are absent or sent home reaches 5 percent of the total school enrollment on a given day (e.g., a school of 600 students should report when 5 percent of their total enrollment (30 students) with ILI are absent or sent home or  $600 \times .05 = 30$ ).

**OR**

- For elementary schools only:** Three or more students with ILI from the same classroom are absent or sent home on a given day.

**AND**

- Report one time per outbreak when either of the above thresholds is met throughout the year.
- Do not report subsequent days of the same outbreak. When reporting additional outbreaks during the same season, make sure that ILI activity has returned to below threshold levels for at least 3 weeks. Report a new outbreak if you reach the threshold again after a minimum of three weeks.
- If symptoms of illness are unknown for an absent student, include this student in your count of ILI absences.
- Please note that individual cases of laboratory-confirmed influenza do not need to be reported by schools.

### Contact Information

School name:	Name of reporter:
City:	Title:
County:	Phone:
Fax:	

### What to report

Date	
Reporting for threshold 1	
Number with ILI	
Total school enrollment	

Date	
Reporting for threshold 2	
Number with ILI	
Total number in classroom	

### How to report

Fax this information to 651-201-4820 (preferred) or call 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 if you have questions.

If you suspect any other reportable disease in any student(s), please notify MDH immediately. Call 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 (toll free).