



# HAMPDEN CHARTER SCHOOL OF SCIENCE

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Dear HCSS Families,

Many of you have probably heard a lot of talk about the flu on the news and other types of media. Much of this talk is about whether or not to get the flu vaccine, and concerns about a flu pandemic. There are many things you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones from getting the flu.

There are generally 2 types of flu:

**Seasonal Flu:** Seasonal flu affects people yearly. The majority of those with the seasonal flu can be treated at home. It is caused by influenza viruses that in New England usually appear in December and lasts until April. **The most common symptoms are:** Sudden onset of fever, tiredness or weakness, body aches, and dry cough. The flu is spread through droplets like saliva and mucus from the mouth, nose and throat. This happens when someone coughs or sneezes near another person (with-in 3-6 feet). People can also contact the virus by touching objects that droplets have landed on, like desks, doorknobs, telephones. A person can touch these objects and then touch their own mouth, nose, or throat with the contaminated hand.

**Pandemic Flu:** Pandemic Flu can occur when a new influenza virus develops. Most people will not have immunities this virus, so will not be able to fight it off like they can the seasonal flu. This makes it's the virus can spread easily and quickly from person to person, all around the world. These Pandemics are unpredictable.

People often confuse other illnesses with the flu. A "stomach bug" or diarrhea and vomiting, is different from the flu. It is caused by totally different viruses than the flu. The common cold is also very different than the flu. Most common colds are merely coughing, sneezing, congestion and sore throats. Common colds are less severe than the flu and do not come on as suddenly.

You can take the following measures to prevent yourself and your loved ones from getting the flu:

- 1) Get the flu vaccine
- 2) Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue of your inner elbow when you cough or sneeze
- 3) Wash your hands often and well. Always wash your hands any time you touch your face, before and after preparing food, before and after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, and any time you touch someone sick.
- 4) Limit contact with others when you, or they, are sick. Stay home from school or work if you are sick. Do not share food and drinks or eating utensils/dishes.
- 5) Clean your home: wash dishes and clothes often if people are sick, clean surfaces touch by a person who is sick with a household disinfectant.

If you or a loved one have flu like symptoms contact your health care provider. Please remember if your child is suffering from flu like symptoms, they cannot return to school until the symptoms have been resolved without the use of medications.

Source: Mass. Dept. of Public Health and Local Public Health Institute of Mass.

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