



HEALTH ALERT

As you know, we are entering the time period for seasonal flu and also for the return of novel H1N1 flu. These diseases can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu. We want to keep our schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

We are working closely with the Polk County Health Department, other Polk County school districts and the Iowa Department of Education to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

For now we are doing everything we can to keep our schools functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help.

- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea. These symptoms apply to ALL types of the flu, not just H1N1.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. Have a plan in place if you need to stay home with a sick child.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. **Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.**
- **Teach your children to wash their hands often** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils.
- **Teach your child to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.** If tissue is unavailable they can cover up their coughs or sneezes using their elbow, arm or sleeve instead of their hand.

Seasonal flu symptoms and H1N1 symptoms will present in a very similar manner, but remember they are NOT the same illness. If a child is sent home with an ILI (Influenza-Like Illness), it is not necessarily H1N1. In fact, it is more likely that it is the seasonal flu. H1N1 cannot be diagnosed without lab testing. In either case, most people are able to recover at home.

As a parent it is important that you stay healthy so you can protect your children. Although the seasonal flu shot does not protect against H1N1, it will protect you from the seasonal flu. Being in good health can help you fight off other types of illness.

The most important message from our nursing staff is: IF YOUR CHILD HAS FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS PLEASE KEEP THEM HOME FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS AFTER THEY ARE FEVER FREE WITHOUT THE USE OF FEVER REDUCERS AND THEIR SYMPTOMS HAVE RESOLVED.

We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu.

The Polk County Health Department has set up many sources to get information or ask questions about the flu. You can visit their website at www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health, follow them on Twitter at [polccohealth](https://twitter.com/polccohealth) or call the H1N1 phone line at 515-323-5330 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

