

1. My child attends the school and is sick with influenza like symptoms. What should I do?

You should contact your health care provider and let them know your child attends the school and is sick with signs or symptoms of influenza like illness. These include fever along with body aches, cough, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose, and in some instances diarrhea. Your health care provider can determine whether your child needs to be seen and evaluated. If your child is very sick, you should call 911 and the child should be seen immediately. If the child is seen, they will decide whether any samples need to be collected to look for the flu and what type of treatment, including antiviral medications, is necessary. Not all people with this new flu require antiviral medication such as Relenza or Tamiflu. Children at higher risk for developing complications of influenza, such as children with underlying cardiac or pulmonary conditions, including asthma, and children with compromised immune systems from disease or treatment, should be considered for antiviral treatment.

If your child is ill, they should stay at home. This is referred to as self-isolation. For this new flu, self-isolation for 7 days from the onset of illness is currently recommended by the health department. If illness persists beyond 7 days, the child should remain in isolation until symptoms have resolved for at least 24 hours. The child will not be allowed back in school until at least 7 days have passed since the onset of illness, even when the school reopens.

There are no restrictions on other members of the household of an ill child unless they too are ill with influenza-like illness. If this occurs, they too should follow the above recommendations. Ill family members should not be going to school or work while ill, and should not be participating in social events. Failure to adhere to this recommendation is how the new flu virus spreads.

Other family members of a child with a known case of the new influenza virus should be evaluated by their health care provider if they are in a risk group for developing complications of influenza if they do become sick. Such persons include pregnant women, infants, the elderly, persons with underlying cardiac or pulmonary conditions, including asthma, and persons with compromised immune systems from disease or treatment. In some instances, the health care provider may choose to put them on medication to prevent them from getting the flu.

2. My child is well. What should I do?

If your child is well, there are no requirements for them to stay at home. However, they should be closely monitored for signs and symptoms of influenza-like illness. These include fever along with body aches, cough, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose, and in some instances diarrhea. If this occurs, you should promptly contact your health care provider and follow the steps above. If your child remains well, they can return to school when it re-opens.

If your child is in a risk group for developing complications of influenza if they do become sick, his or her health care provider should consider putting him or her on medication to prevent them from getting the flu. Such persons include children with underlying cardiac or pulmonary conditions, including asthma, and children with compromised immune systems from disease or treatment.

3. My child is sick. Should they be treated?

Not all individuals with the newly identified influenza virus require treatment. This decision should be made by your health care provider. The antiviral medications are most beneficial when given within 48 hours of illness onset, and are generally not recommended for use if the patient has been ill for more than 48 hours. In children at higher risk for developing complications of influenza, such as children with underlying cardiac or pulmonary conditions, including asthma, and children with compromised immune systems from disease or treatment, antiviral treatment should be considered.

4. My child was sick. When can they come back to school?

Your child should remain at home for at least 7 days after the onset of illness. If they are still ill after 7 days, they should remain at home until symptoms have resolved for at least 24 hours. Returning to school too early, while they are possibly still infectious, places other non-ill children at risk.

5. One of my children attends the school, but I have other children who attend different schools. Can my other children go to school?

Yes, your other children can attend school and other activities as long as they are not ill.

6. What should be done regarding extra-curricular activities?

Extra-curricular activities associated with any closed school should also be cancelled for the duration of the school closure period. This does not apply to any school that remains open.

Division of School Health
c-paschool@state.pa.us