

August 24, 2009

Dear Parents:

We understand that health officials are expecting this to be a busy flu season, both with seasonal flu and H1N1. That said, I am committed to communicating with our families in an ongoing effort to educate you about the flu and to help our families be prepared and stay healthy. I want to assure you that Gwinnett County Public Schools is communicating with the local Public Health officials at the East Metro Health District who recommend we continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines to help prevent the further spreading of all illnesses. **This guidance recommends that, based on current flu conditions, students and staff with flu-like illness stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).**

At this time, CDC recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools and child care programs focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill, and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. These hygiene measures include covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or coughing or sneezing into their sleeve if a tissue isn't available), frequently washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap and water is not possible.

As part of our back-to-school information we shared a flyer on the flu. Some of the tips from that flyer appear on the back of this letter. In addition, that flyer is available on the school district's web site (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us). Please review this information and share it with your child as the health and safety of our students and staff is a priority that I know we all share. We will continue to work with local health officials to be sure we are doing everything we can to provide a safe learning environment.

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact the East Metro Health Department at 770-339-4260. For additional information, please visit www.EMHD.com and www.cdc.gov.

Sincerely,

Ivy Creek Elementary

Healthy Habits: Staying healthy during cold and flu season

- Keep your distance. Avoid close contact, maintaining personal space to avoid getting germs from others or sharing your germs with them.
- Don't share personal items (toothbrushes, towels, utensils, etc.).
- Stay home when you are sick and keep children home from school when they are ill.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Sneeze and cough into your elbow or cover with a tissue. In other words, keep germs off your hands. And put used tissues in a wastebasket. Wash hands after you cough or sneeze.
- Keep "germy" hands away from eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Practice good health habits... Get enough sleep, eat a good diet, be physically active, drink plenty of fluids (especially water), manage stress, and get fresh air... every day.
- Make sure your diet is balanced, with lots of fruits and vegetables, especially dark green, red, and yellow vegetables, and a variety of fruits.
- Get flu shots to protect against both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu virus. The CDC strongly recommends flu vaccinations for both children and adults. H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available later in the fall.
- Get a pneumonia shot to prevent secondary infection if you are over the age of 65 or have a chronic illness such as diabetes or asthma.