

Dear Students and Parents,

There is currently heightened awareness as it relates to the H1N1 also known as the “swine flu” which is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This virus was first detected in the United States in April 2009. Spread of the H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something - such as a surface or object – with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. In seasonal flu, certain people are at “high risk” of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this 2009 H1N1 virus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at “high risk” of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and kidney disease.

Flu can spread easily from person to person. We are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu at Odyssey Charter School. To accomplish this we need your help. Students, staff, and their families must take personal responsibility for helping to slow the spread of the virus. The following are a few things everyone can do to keep from getting sick and assist with preventing the spread of the flu:

Teach your child good hand hygiene practice often by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Flu viruses can live on certain surfaces from 20 minutes up to two (2) hours. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective (between 65-95% alcohol are recommended) if soap and water are not available.

Teach and practice respiratory etiquette by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Sneezing into your hand still permits for germ particles that are dispersed from your nasal and throat cavities to be transmitted afterward by touching objects like door knobs, pencils, desks, or computer keyboards, thus putting other individuals at risk. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way. Tissue and other paper products are porous so even though they provide some form of barrier protection they are not foolproof and you need to follow up with hand washing as previously instructed.

Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius. Look for possible signs of fever: if the person feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering. Symptoms of the flu include cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, vomiting, diarrhea, and feeling tired.

Stay home when sick

CDC recommends that individuals with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications. Keeping people with fever at home may reduce the number of people who get infected. Because high temperatures are linked with higher amounts of virus, people with a fever may be more contagious.

Talk with your health care providers about whether you should be vaccinated for seasonal flu. Also if you are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, you should consider getting the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available.

For more information regarding flu prevention visit www.flu.gov more specifically on this website *Preparing for the Flu (including 2009 H1N1 Flu) A Communication Toolkit for Schools Grades K-12* or www.cdc.gov for the most current information about the flu.