

As flu season approaches, we have been working with the Oakland County Health Division and our colleagues across the county to establish common protocols and best practices for dealing with communicable illness in our buildings. The overarching message being promoted by the health authorities is preparation, not panic.

The emphasis at this time is on prevention of flu by taking good care of yourself (eating fruits and vegetables, getting enough sleep, exercising) and practicing good personal hygiene. In addition, health authorities recommend two vaccinations: one for “seasonal flu”, and one for the H1N1 virus. Priority populations for the H1N1 vaccinations will be pregnant women, caregivers of children less than 6 months old, health care workers, children 6 months – 24 years old, and those ages 25–49 with health issues.

The Oakland County Health Division is offering seasonal flu shots at this time for \$10. The Health Division expects to offer the H1N1 vaccinations free of charge to county residents when they are available in the coming weeks. For more information about flu shot clinics being held in various locations this fall:

[http://www.oakgov.com/health/initiatives/flu\\_main.html](http://www.oakgov.com/health/initiatives/flu_main.html)

What has changed since last spring’s outbreak, based on what our health officials learned then? For a “normal” flu season, three things: 1) School closures are not recommended because students still congregate elsewhere, it seriously impacts working parents, and students miss valuable lessons in school; 2) Students and staff should stay home until they are fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications, and 3) A physician’s note is not required for the student or staff member to return to school. In addition, the authorities observed that children under age 14 were most affected by the flu and are expected to be the target group again this fall.

Here are the action steps that you can expect from Hazel Park Schools for a “normal” flu season, all based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and the Oakland County Health Division:

- Staff will educate and encourage students to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, or to cough or sneeze into their elbow when a tissue is not available. Parents are asked to reinforce this message at home.
- Where soap and water are not readily available, the District will provide hand sanitizers in classrooms and instructional areas.
- Students will be reminded to practice good hand hygiene and will be provided the time for hand washing or sanitizing.
- Students, teachers and staff who are ill will be moved to a designated, separate room until they can be sent home. The number of staff who take care of the sick person will be limited, and the sick person will be provided with a surgical mask to wear if they can tolerate it.
- Sick students, teachers and staff will be sent home and advised that they should stay

at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without fever-reducing medication.

- Students who return to school still exhibiting symptoms of illness will be promptly sent home with parents.
- Please contact your physicians with questions, or go directly to the emergency room. School employees are not prepared to diagnose illness.
- Sending a sick child to school is NOT an option. Parents who work should make plans now for their care of their children in case they are ill or unexpectedly sent home sick.
- Sick students and staff who are at higher risk of complications from the flu are encouraged to get early medical evaluations when they are sick. These individuals can benefit from early treatment with antiviral medications.
- Super-cleaning of classrooms and buildings beyond the normal cleaning will not occur because it is of only short duration. Normal cleaning procedures, which are effective at killing germs, will be followed.
- The District will stay in regular communication with local public health officials.

Schools in Hazel Park will not close unless there is overwhelming absenteeism or the CDC guidelines change. The superintendent will make a decision to close based on the circumstances and in consultation with local health officials.

To be prepared for a more severe flu outbreak, the Oakland County Superintendent's Association has formed a subcommittee to look at responses. Every school district in the county must consider its protocol in a more serious flu season that could keep staff and students from attending school. The implications for students, teachers, families and communities could be far-reaching, when one considers that those who are ill might be out for 7 days or more. We will be updating you with information about a severe outbreak protocol soon.

Again, it is important for families and staff members to be prepared for flu season, usually fall through early spring in the U.S. Please take steps now to help protect yourself and your loved ones from illness this year. For more information, visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

Sincerely,

Victor C. Mayo  
Superintendent of Schools