Dear Parents:

Several students at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School have been reported with influenza or influenza-like illness. Please review the following information to protect the health of your child and your family.

Influenza is caused by viruses that are spread from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people. The symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people with influenza also have vomiting and/or diarrhea. Most people infected with influenza will have a mild illness lasting 3 to 5 days.

Certain groups of people are at higher risk for severe illness when infected with influenza:

* Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old;
* Adults 65 years of age and older ;
* Pregnant women;
* Persons with certain health conditions (such as asthma; diabetes; heart, kidney, or liver diseases; weakened immune system, blood or metabolic conditions; and some neurological conditions);
* Persons with morbid obesity (body mass index equal to or greater than 40);
* Persons less than 19 years of age on chronic aspirin therapy;
* American Indians/Alaska Natives; and
* Residents of chronic-care facilities.

**People in these high-risk groups should contact their physician immediately if influenza symptoms develop to consider treatment with antiviral medication.**

Public Health does not recommend dismissal of the school or cancellation of classes for the control of seasonal influenza. **However, students and staff with influenza-like illness (fever with a cough or sore throat) should stay home and not attend classes or participate in other group activities for at least 24 hours after fever resolves without the use of fever-reducing medications.**

There are important actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. All people are encouraged to take these steps:

* Get a flu shot every year. Vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older.
* Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If no tissue is available, cough into your elbow.
* Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
* If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
* Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
* Do not share personal items such as towels or utensils.
* Routinely clean items or surfaces that are touched frequently (use your normal cleaning products).

Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza. Contact your doctor, go to [www.ochealthinfo.com](http://www.ochealthinfo.com), or call the Orange County Health Care Agency Health Referral Line at (800) 564-8448 to see if vaccine is available for your child and your family.

Additional information about influenza is available from:

Orange County Health Care Agency: <https://ochealthinfo.com/about-hca/public-health-services/communicable-disease-control/information-schools-and-child-care>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/)

California Department of Public Health: [http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/](http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/pages/default.aspx)

If you have questions about this letter, please contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the school (phone number).