

## INFLUENZA UPDATE

### **Definition:**

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and can lead to death. Several strains of influenza may circulate at the same time. The most commonly seen strains of influenza are: influenza A/H1, influenza A/H3 and influenza B.

### **Signs and symptoms:**

Symptoms of Influenza include a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue. Vomiting and diarrhea are more common in children than adults.

### **Transmission:**

Influenza is transmitted from person to person mainly by droplets when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. It is also possible to get the flu from touching a surface that has flu virus on it, and then touching your own mouth or nose. Most people may be able to infect others up to 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. Average incubation period is 2 days.

### **Diagnosis:**

Influenza-like illness (ILI) is defined as a fever greater than 100° F with a cough and/or sore throat. Influenza virus is diagnosed through a lab test. The most common types of tests available are:

- Rapid tests – quick turn-around (usually 20 minutes), but may have false positives and false negatives. Some rapid tests can distinguish between A and B strains, but cannot difference the sub type.
- PCR - longer turn-around time (usually around 48 hours) but has very few false positives or false negatives. PCR can distinguish between A and B strains, and some labs can sub type the influenza A sample to determine if they are H1 or H3. Sub typing takes additional time to complete.

### **Treatment Recommendations**

- Prescription antiviral treatment for influenza is available and is most effective if started within 48 hours. (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>)

### **Exclusions**

- Students and staff with influenza or ILI should be excluded from school and school related activities until at least 24 hours after fever resolves without the use of antipyretic drugs.
- It is recommended that any child with a fever of 100° or greater should be excluded from school, please follow your individual schools guidelines.

## Flu Symptom Checklist for Families

Confirmed cases of influenza have been identified in Maine. We expect that we will continue to detect cases into the fall and winter, and that the number of cases may increase. As we strive to keep everyone healthy this school year, it is most important that students and adults who are sick **not** go to school, work, or social activities. The following checklist can help determine if someone has influenza-like illness (ILI).

### Does my child have the flu?

Yes	No	Does your child have a fever of 100 degrees or more?
Yes	No	Does your child have a cough?
Yes	No	Does your child have a sore throat?

### Should I keep my child home?

If you checked yes to:                      Fever of 100 degrees or more  
**And**  
A cough **or** a sore throat

Your child has an influenza-like illness. Keep your child home for 24 hours after the fever resolves without the use of medication.

If you checked yes to only one of the questions above, or if your child is ill with other symptoms, keep your child at home at least one day to observe for additional symptoms. If additional symptoms develop, use the checklist questions again to decide whether to continue to keep the child home.

### When should my child go to the doctor?

Call your doctor or seek medical care if your child has trouble breathing or has behavior changes including changes in eating or drinking habits. Call your health care provider if your child is ill enough that you would normally seek health care advice.

For more information please see [www.maineflu.gov](http://www.maineflu.gov)