

Dear Lincoln Middle School Parents and Staff:

Over the past several days we have been seeing an increase of illnesses in our schools, including respiratory-coughs and colds, gastrointestinal (GI)-vomiting and diarrhea. Additionally, there have been increased reports of confirmed influenza and norovirus cases. We want our school communities to be informed about **influenza** (flu), **norovirus** (sometimes called stomach flu) to minimize illness and to keep kids healthy and in class. The Larimer County Department of Public Health and Environment has received multiple reports of influenza cases in local school as well as schools reporting norovirus. Influenza is currently being reported as “wide spread” in Colorado.

Please review this letter and contact your health care provider for more information about these illnesses. School districts follow Public Health guidelines, which state that a child with influenza-like symptoms, fever, or unexplained vomiting or diarrhea should be excluded from school until 24 hours for influenza and 48 hours for norovirus/GI after their symptoms have resolved and they are not taking medication to reduce fevers or diarrhea and vomiting symptoms.

FLU (INFLUENZA)

Influenza spreads when someone with the illness coughs, sneezes or talks, and small droplets get into the nose or mouth of someone close by. Less often a person might get the flu by touching a surface that has flu virus on it and then touching his/her own mouth or nose.

Prevention:

Preventive measures are by far the best way to minimize spread of flu at school:

· **Get yourself and your child(ren) vaccinated if you have not yet had a flu shot this flu season.**

Please contact your health care provider or go to <https://vaccinefinder.org/> to search for the nearest location that offers the flu vaccine.

· **Stay home/keep sick kids home if sick.**

· Cover coughs and sneezes.

· Wash hands often.

· Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

Symptoms of influenza usually start suddenly and include:

· Fever

· Cough

· Sore throat

· Muscle aches and pains

Stomach upset, especially in children

The flu generally lasts 3-5 days, but can last up to two weeks. Consult your health care provider for symptoms that are severe or do not get better.

NOROVIRUS

Norovirus (stomach flu) spreads easily from person to person. Norovirus is found in stool and vomit. A person can get sick when the virus gets into his/her mouth. This usually happens by eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with norovirus, touching contaminated surfaces, or having contact with someone who is infected with norovirus.

Prevention:

Preventive measures are important in minimizing spread of norovirus in schools:

· The single best way to prevent getting norovirus is to **practice proper hand washing.**

· **Stay home/keep kids home if sick.**

· Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces with cleaning supplies containing bleach.

· There is no vaccine for norovirus.

Symptoms include:

· Diarrhea

· Nausea and vomiting

· Stomach pain

· Fever, headache, body aches

You can feel extremely ill and throw up or have diarrhea many times a day, lasting 1-2 days. This can cause dehydration, especially in young children. Consult your health care provider for symptoms that are severe or do not get better and how to prevent dehydration.

Lastly, now is a good time to review your family's immunization history and make sure all are up to date on vaccinations. Immunizations are one of the best ways to protect you and your children from a variety of diseases.

Sincerely,

Dana Koenig, RN
School Nurse