District Health Department No. 4

District Health Dept. #4
Providing
A Healthier Tomorrow
Since 1930

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Administrative Services
Alpena County
Office

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Influenza is spreading quickly and is widespread in Northern Michigan.

Influenza, also called "the flu", is a respiratory viral illness that can cause fever, cough, chills, headache, muscle aches, runny nose and sore throat. With Influenza, a fever is almost always present and the cough is often severe. Influenza symptoms usually last 3 to 7 days. Influenza is not the same as the "stomach flu," which is a gastrointestinal illness causing severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea that usually lasts 1 to 2 days.

The influenza virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, causing droplets containing the virus to spread in the air. Uninfected people can become infected by being in close contact with these droplets (within 6 feet) and breathing them in or by touching surfaces the droplets fell onto.

There are many things that can be done to reduce the risk of influenza in our schools, homes, and communities and protect ourselves and our loved ones:

1. It's not too late to get vaccinated. Influenza vaccine is widely available through the local health department, area physicians and pharmacies.
2. In general, children and adults should stay home when ill. We recommend that people sick with any influenza-like illness remain at home until they have been fever-free (a fever is 100F or 38C) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
3. Teach your family how to lower their risk of getting and spreading the influenza virus by:
   - Washing their hands often with soap and running warm water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer such as alcohol gel or foams if soap and water is not available.
   - Coughing or sneezing into their upper shirt sleeve or elbow—not onto their hands!
   - Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. That's how germs enter the body.
4. Seek medical care immediately if your child experiences any of the following symptoms: Illness lasting longer than a week, fast breathing or trouble breathing, not drinking enough fluids or not urinating, Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse coughing, or if they become lethargic or irritable.

Sincerely,

Joshua Meyerson, MD, MPH
Medical Director