

We have entered the time of year when we see influenza (flu) and other respiratory viruses at school. This year, KWPCS has experienced an increased numbers of documented cases and we want to let you know what steps we are taking to keep our school community healthy and how you can help. Our custodial staff is taking additional precautions to ensure that common areas within our schools are properly sanitized to minimize the spread of germs. And, as always, staff encourages students to regularly wash and/or sanitize their hands to prevent children catching the flu or cold.

Respiratory infections, such as the flu and common cold, are spread when people come in close contact with sick people and inhale airborne droplets, or come in contact with contaminated surfaces. Flu and cold symptoms can sometimes be difficult to tell apart. Please review the chart below for a comparison:

	<b>FLU</b>	<b>COMMON COLD</b>
<b>How it begins</b>	Sudden	Gradual
<b>Cough</b>	Severe	Mild to moderate
<b>Muscles</b>	Achy	None to mild aches
<b>Stuffy, runny nose</b>	Sometimes	Common
<b>Tiredness</b>	Severe	Mild
<b>Fever</b>	None to high grade	None to low grade
<b>Complications</b>	Bronchitis/Pneumonia	Earache/Sinus infection

The flu can be serious for children of all ages, causing them to miss school, activities, or even be hospitalized. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the *Take 3* approach to fight the flu:

1. Get the flu vaccine every year
2. Take everyday preventative actions to stop the spread of germs:
  - Wash hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available,
  - Cover coughs with a disposable tissue or cough into their sleeve,
  - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth,
  - Avoid close contact with sick individuals,
  - Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils, and
  - Stay home when sick.
3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your healthcare provider prescribes them

You can help us maintain a healthy school environment in a variety of ways:

- Reinforce all of the above preventive behaviors practiced at school,
- Make sure children get plenty of exercise, sleep, and healthy food, and
- Keep sick children home, especially if they have a fever above 100° F, diarrhea, vomiting, or a severe cough.

A couple additional important points:

- Notify your child's healthcare provider if your child develops difficulty breathing or a new onset of wheezing, and
- If your child has asthma, please make sure we have a copy of your child's Asthma Action Plan.

Important information about preventing the flu can be found at these websites:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm> and 2
- [www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/school](http://www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/school).