



St Louis Park Public Schools

*Achieving success, one student at a time.*

**St. Louis Park Public Schools  
Park Spanish Immersion School**

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

I am writing today to inform you that Park Spanish Immersion (PSI) has received reports that an increased number of students are staying home from school with Influenza-like illness (ILI) symptoms. We cannot confirm that these students are afflicted with the H1N1 strain of influenza.

Right now, H1N1 appears to be acting like seasonal influenza in terms of how sick it makes people and how it is spread. Most people who have had H1N1 in Minnesota have recovered without complications. However, like any flu virus, H1N1 can be a serious disease. Some people have been hospitalized with H1N1, and several deaths have occurred from it. Most people who had H1N1 in Minnesota have been school-aged children. People at high risk for complications from influenza (including seasonal influenza and H1N1 novel influenza) are those with underlying medical conditions (such as neurological or neuromuscular disease, heart, lung or kidney disease, asthma, diabetes, or a suppressed immune system), pregnant women, children under 5 years (especially those under age 2) or people age 65 years or older. If you are at high risk, contact your doctor immediately if you develop flu symptoms.

Influenza spreads when a person with the flu coughs or sneezes. We are asking that you help prevent the spread of influenza in our schools by taking the following important steps:

- **Keep your child home if they have symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms: fever of greater than 100 degrees, with cough and/or a sore throat. Other symptoms that may occur with flu include runny nose, headache, body aches, vomiting and diarrhea.
- **Keep your child home from school for at least 24 hours *after* the fever is gone** without use of fever-reducing drugs like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin). Usually that means staying home for 5 to 7 days. When your child is at home with flu symptoms, they should also avoid contact with others except to get medical care. This includes staying away from after-school and other activities.

Students should stay home until their fever has been gone for 24 hours even if they are on antiviral drugs such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) or have had a flu test that is negative. Flu tests are not always accurate.

When your child does return to school after an influenza-like illness (ILI), they may still be able to spread the illness, although less easily than when they had fever and flu symptoms. To avoid spreading the virus, it is very important to wash hands frequently, and cover coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue.

- **Consider vaccination.** The Minnesota Department of Health recommends vaccination for regular, seasonal influenza. This step is especially critical for people who are at high risk of influenza-related complications.
  - A separate vaccination will be needed for novel H1N1 influenza. The vaccine is likely to be available in late October 2009. First priority for H1N1 vaccination will be given to pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, people age 6 months to 24 years, people 25 through 64 years of age with chronic health disorders or weakened immune systems, and health care providers. It is likely that two doses of H1N1 vaccine will be needed, given several weeks apart.
  
- **Learn how to care for a person with flu symptoms at home and when to seek medical attention.** Check the CDC and MDH websites:
  - [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm)
  - <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/basics/care>
  
- **Students should clean their hands** often, with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
  
- **Students should cover coughs and sneezes** using a tissue when one is available, or cough or sneeze into an elbow or arm. Hands should not be used to cover a cough or sneeze.
  
- **Students should avoid sharing personal items:** drinks, food, eating utensils, etc.

For more information, visit the Minnesota Department of Health website at [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) federal flu website at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

Thank you for your assistance in helping to reduce the spread of influenza in our school. We look forward to a productive school year.

Sincerely,

Sra. Gerry Lee Lukaska, Principal  
Park Spanish Immersion School