

Public Health
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Dear Principal:

Re: Update on the 2012-2013 Toronto Outbreak Season

The 2012-2013 influenza (flu) season is upon us. Influenza has hit early with a large number of lab-confirmed cases reported to Toronto Public Health. A number of other viruses that cause coughs and colds are also circulating in Toronto. In addition, norovirus, a common cause of vomiting and diarrhea, is also being seen in Toronto.

There are a number of steps your students and staff can take to help prevent the spread of influenza, other cough and cold viruses, and viruses that cause vomiting and diarrhea, such as norovirus. These include:

- **Get your flu shot:** Influenza immunization is the most effective way to prevent influenza illness.
- **Clean your hands:** Clean hands frequently using alcohol-based hand rubs (minimum concentration of 70% alcohol). If hands are visibly dirty, they should be cleaned with soap and water. Ensure that students and staff have the time and supplies to perform proper hand cleaning.
- **Cover your cough:** Use a tissue or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Children and staff should have easy access to tissues.
- **Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces/items.**
- **Encourage staff and students to stay home if they are ill.**

Please help us raise awareness of these steps that students, parents and your staff can take to reduce illness in our community. More information is available at the Toronto Public Health website:

- For more information about seasonal influenza and the flu vaccine, please visit the Toronto Public Health website at: http://www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/factsheets/influenza_factsheet.htm
- For more information about norovirus, please visit: http://www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/factsheets/pdf/fs_norovirus.pdf
- To view and/or use the Lather, Rinse, Defeat Germs – hand washing video, please visit: www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/clean_hands/index.htm

Please feel free to share the attached "Dear Parents/Caregivers" letter with your student body. If you have additional questions or would like some support for your school, please contact your Public Health Nurse or **Toronto Health Connection (416-338-7600)**.

Sincerely,



Dr. Barbara Yaffe
Director, Communicable Disease Control
and Associate Medical Officer of Health