



## UTAH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Dear Faculty, Staff, and Parents of Students – Schools in Utah County:

Utah County has been experiencing a high rate of influenza (“flu”), as is the case in the entire country. As such, increasing numbers of absences have been noted in all schools in this county. Because it is entirely probable that you have been or will be exposed to this illness, it is necessary to watch for signs and symptoms.

If you become ill, it is necessary to stay at home until the symptoms resolve. Your fever should be gone for 24 hours (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine) before returning to school.

In addition, if you have a compromised immune system or a chronic illness, contracting influenza may have a greater chance of causing complications. We recommend that if you are immunocompromised, you refrain from attending school or large group functions until influenza numbers wane. Updated flu numbers can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>

Getting the yearly flu vaccine is one of the most important ways of preventing and spreading the flu. Even though it's best to get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available, getting the vaccine in the season can still be helpful. There are still a few months left in the flu season, so it's still a good idea to get protected now with a flu shot, if you have not already done so.

The following page explains more about flu prevention, signs and symptoms, and other concerns.

Controlling communicable diseases in school settings and in the community is of utmost importance. In addition to the burden a person has when ill, they may also spread the illness to others. It is essential that we all help control the spread of communicable diseases.

Sincerely,

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# INFLUENZA

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html>

## What is Influenza (Flu)?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

## Flu Symptoms

Flu is different from a cold. People who have flu often feel some or all these symptoms:

- fever (not everyone will have a fever)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- headache and body aches
- chills
- fatigue

## How Flu Spreads

Flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets in the air made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Sometimes the virus can pass by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

## Period of Contagiousness

- People with flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after illness begins.
- Some otherwise healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days **after** becoming sick.

## Onset of Symptoms

The time from when a person is exposed and infected with flu to when symptoms begin is about 2 days but can range from about 1 to 4 days.

## Complications of Flu

Complications can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

## People at High Risk from Flu

Anyone can get flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to flu can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years.

## Preventing Seasonal Flu

Recommendations from the CDC:

- The yearly flu vaccine is the most important step in protecting against flu. Vaccination can reduce illness, doctors' visits, and missed work or school, as well as prevent hospitalizations.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Stay home for 24 hours after fever is gone (without a flu-reducing medicine).
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or if not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated.