

Dear Parents,

As you have probably already heard, there is great concern nationally regarding the upcoming flu season and particularly the resurgence of the 2009 H1N1 virus (Swine Flu). Unlike most flu strains the population that seems most effected by the H1N1 virus is young people. The largest number of cases has occurred between 5 to 24 years of age and the hardest hit appears to be teenagers, young adults and pregnant women. Due to the potential course and nature of this coming flu season, Cheney schools are taking extra steps, precautions and measures to try to prevent or at least limit the spread of flu. Parents can play a big part in the battle against illness as well. The following are some recommendations to parents and families, in your preparation for the upcoming flu season (These recommendations are from the Center for Disease Control and State and Federal publications).

- Get your family vaccinated for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.
- Encourage your child to use good hand hygiene. Washing hands often with soap and water, and the use of hand sanitizers are effective ways to help prevent the spreading of viruses.
- Encourage your child to cough or sneeze into a tissue or into his/her shoulder or elbow (not into the hands) if a tissue is not available.
- Discourage your child from sharing drinking containers with others (pop cans, glasses, bottles, etc) or personal items (lip balm, lipstick, etc).
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Plan in advance for child care at home in event that your child becomes ill or school is dismissed due to concern regarding the spread of flu. (plan for a minimum of 5 school days) **Note:** School closure will not occur unless 1) there is a magnitude of student or faculty absenteeism that interferes with the school's ability to function; or 2) there is a significant change in the risk or danger presented by the flu.
- Monitor the health of children every morning by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. Symptoms of flu include: fever (100 degrees or higher); cough; sore throat; runny or stuffy nose; headache; body aches; fatigue; chills; vomiting; and diarrhea
- Should your child become sick do not send him or her to school, an alternative child care setting, or neighborhood and community functions. Sick students should remain at home for 24 hours after the fever has broken. (24 hours with out the aide of fever reducers) **Note:** Aspirin should not be given to children or teenagers who have flu; as this may cause a rare illness called Reye's Syndrome.
- Contact the school and report all absences.
- Designate a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- Consider having one person act as the main caregiver for anyone who becomes ill.
- Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids (to prevent dehydration)
- If your child or another family member is at high risk of complications from flu, and becomes ill, seek a medical evaluation immediately. Early intervention could

be of benefit. High risk factors for flu in general include: children under 5 years; people who have chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, compromised immune systems, or neuromuscular disease; pregnant women; and people 65 or older.

- Warning signs that any individual with flu is in need of urgent medical attention include: fast breathing or trouble breathing; bluish or grey skin color; not drinking enough fluids; not urinating or no tears when crying; severe or persistent vomiting; not waking up or not interacting; being so irritable that the child does not want to be held; pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; and when flu like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

Most of the information and recommendations in this letter are adaptations of guidelines set forth by the Center of Disease Control or the Pandemic flu policies of other school districts. Recommendations are based on current flu conditions. Additions to and changes in these recommendations may result due to shifts away from these current conditions.

We at Cheney schools will be monitoring the progression of flu and the H1N1 virus through out the school year. We will keep you informed of new developments through AlertNow and local news media outlets as needed. If you would like to find out more about this topic, we are currently working on a link that you can access through our district website at www.usd268.com or log onto <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/generalinfo.htm> for the most recent advice regarding the virus and how to prepare for a possible pandemic.

To assist us in our desire to keep all kids safe and healthy, please make sure that current contact information is up to date with your child's school. Also, please have a plan in place for you child if they should get sick. We will be sending students home if they are displaying the symptoms of the flu. Since we do not have the expertise or the capacity to keep ill students at school, we will count on you having a plan to take care of your child in the event they come down with these symptoms.

It is hoped that this letter is helpful to you in planning for the coming months. If you have any questions, concerns or would like more information regarding the steps that Cheney schools are taking to limit the effects of flu, please call your building principal.

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