



Olga Hugelmeyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

November 20, 2024

Dear Elizabeth Public Schools Learning Community,

Elizabeth Public Schools is strongly committed to maintaining safe and healthy environments for students, team members, and families.

Communities often start to see an increase in the occurrences of Influenza (Flu) and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) as the winter season approaches. An important part of keeping our learning community safe and healthy is recognizing the symptoms related to these contagious viral illnesses and taking the appropriate precautions to help prevent their spread.

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs, is different from a cold, and usually comes suddenly. Symptoms associated with flu may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). The most effective way to protect against flu is to get an annual flu vaccine, which is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for most children.

RSV is one of the many viruses that cause respiratory illness of the nose, throat, and lungs. It is most common during the winter and almost all children under the age of 2 will get RSV. Symptoms, which generally last an average of 5-7 days may include fever, cough (dry or wet sounding), congestion, runny nose and/or sneezing, and fussiness and reduced hunger in infants.

Anyone experiencing signs and symptoms of flu or RSV should stay home and seek medical advice from a physician.

We consult on a regular basis with our medical advisor and the Elizabeth Health Department and have instituted protocols to prevent the spread of common contagious diseases to the best of our ability. Among those protocols is excluding students with a fever (100.4 °F or higher) from school until they have been symptom free for 48 hours without a fever reducing medication. Additionally, throughout our district, our custodial staff places an increased emphasis on cleaning and disinfecting “touch points” (door knobs, railings, student desks, etc.) in addition to the routine cleaning of classrooms, offices, and shared spaces such as cafeterias, gymnasiums, auditoriums, hallways, and stairwells.

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Consistent practice of proper hand hygiene is also necessary to maintain a safe and healthy environment. Washing hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer as an alternative when hand washing isn't readily accessible, avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands, and covering coughs and sneezes with the inside of the elbow all go a long way toward preventing the spread of illness.

In addition to the information contained in this letter, we have provided flu and RSV resources from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other health authorities on our website. You may find them by visiting www.epsnj.org/flu-rsv.

We thank you for your support in helping us to maintain safe and healthy environments for all the members of our learning community, as it is a responsibility we all share.

Sincerely,



Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer