



To: School Staff and Parents

From: Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) Communicable Disease

Date: January 30, 2020

Many schools within our jurisdiction (Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties) have been experiencing an increase in illnesses with **viral gastroenteritis** and/or **influenza/upper respiratory illnesses**. This letter is to provide guidance on preventing the spread of illness at school and at home.

Viral gastroenteritis, sometimes referred to as the “stomach flu” (although it has no relation to influenza) is usually caused by a virus called norovirus. Symptoms of norovirus typically last for 1-3 days and include vomiting, diarrhea, muscle aches, low-grade fever, and nausea. Onset of symptoms can be sudden and severe. Norovirus easily spreads from person-to-person through contact with the stool or vomit of infected persons or contaminated surfaces. The following are important disease control measures for the prevention and control of norovirus:

- Frequent and thorough **hand washing** with soap and water
- Increased **cleaning and sanitizing** of door knobs, restrooms, and frequently touched surfaces
- **Disinfection** of any surface contaminated with diarrhea and/or vomit with a chlorine solution (1 cup bleach per 16 cups water) or other approved disinfectant
- Keeping sick children/staff home for 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea. If the school is experiencing an outbreak, TCHD may require this exclusion to be increased to 48 hours.

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious illness that is caused by the influenza virus. Influenza symptoms may include fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, and body aches. Most people who get influenza will recover in 1 to 2 weeks. The following are important disease control measures for the prevention and control of respiratory illnesses:

- Getting a yearly **influenza vaccine**
- Frequent and thorough **hand washing** with soap and water
- **Covering your mouth** when coughing or sneezing with your arm and not your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Increased **cleaning and disinfection** of frequently touched surfaces with the school's regular sanitizer.
- Keeping sick children/staff home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medication.

We appreciate your cooperation with these disease control measures. For questions or to report an outbreak, please contact Tri-County Health Department, at 303-220-9200, and ask for someone in Communicable Disease.