

Adapted from the National Association of School Nurses website (2007)

## Helpful Advice and Tips for Employees, Parents and Students on Controlling the Flu:

***Q. Should I keep my child home from school or should I stay home from work with cold or flu symptoms? Is your advice different for cold versus the flu?***

***A. First, It's important to know the difference between cold and flu.*** Flu is a serious illness, and people who have the flu should always stay home from school and work. Flu symptoms include fever, along with chills, cough, sore throat, headache or muscle aches. Many people describe it "like being hit by a truck." It is a good idea to contact your doctor if you or your child has these symptoms. Symptoms of a common cold include stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and hacking cough. Often, cold symptoms come on gradually. If a person with cold symptoms develops a fever, serious cough or the cold symptoms last for more than two weeks, medical care should be sought out.

***If a person had flu symptoms, they should stay home from work or school. If a person has a cold, the decision to stay home may depend on the severity of symptoms.*** A good rule of thumb is for a person with a fever of 100 degrees or higher to stay home.

***Q: If a person or child does have the flu, how long should they stay home from work or school?***

***A: Persons with the flu should stay home until they have been without fever (temperature under 100 degrees) for 24 hours, to prevent spreading illness to others.*** Flu is spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Occasionally, people can get the flu from touching a germ-infested surface. Children are one of the biggest sources of flu spread.

***Q: Should I call the doctor if I think I have the flu or think my child has the flu?***

***A: If a person is experiencing flu symptoms, they should contact their doctor quickly.*** Some people may benefit from an antiviral medication, which can be prescribed by a doctor and can help lessen the number of days that a person is sick with the virus. To be effective, antiviral medication should be taken within 12-48 hours after flu symptoms begin.

***Q: What should I do to help prevent the rest of the household from getting sick?***

***A: Teach and practice healthy habits.*** Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds to help prevent germs from spreading. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, because the virus can spread when your hands touch surfaces that are infested with germs. It is important for children to learn to cover their mouths and noses when sneezing or coughing. Other ways to avoid getting sick include not sharing drinks, water bottles, silverware and pencils.

***Q: What can we do to avoid getting the flu?***

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent flu is to get a vaccine. While October and November are the best times to get a flu vaccine, it's never too late to get vaccinated. It takes about two weeks for the vaccine to become fully effective. There is plenty of vaccine still available, according to the CDC.

