

# FORT THOMAS

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

November 10, 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As you may already know from listening to the news, national and state health officials are expressing concerns about the enterovirus - D68 (EV-D68) which causes respiratory illness mainly in children. This is typically an issue in summer and fall so hopefully we are coming to the end of this season. However, flu activity is usually heavy beginning in December. While the NKY Health Department is not reporting an increase in flu cases, the Fort Thomas Independent School district is taking steps to reduce the spread of flu and enterovirus in our schools. However, we need your help to do this.

To help prevent the spread of these illnesses, teach your family good hygiene habits:

- Wash hands frequently for 20 seconds or the length of the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- Do not touch eyes, nose or mouth.
- It is not necessary to disinfect beyond routine cleaning.
- Regularly clean areas and items likely to have frequent hand contact.
- Cover mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing with paper tissue or use bend of elbow. Discard tissues immediately after each use and then wash hands.
- Do not share eating utensils, drink from the same cup or share toothbrushes.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not accessible (Use 1/2 teaspoon or nickel-size equivalent.)

Symptoms for both illnesses can be found on the attached fact sheet and the NKY Health Department website <http://www.nkyhealth.org/Fact-Sheets/Flu-Fact-Sheet.aspx>. A child with these symptoms should remain home for at least 24 hours after he/she is free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and it would also be helpful if you indicated these symptoms to the attendance office staff or leave a message on the recording message for absentees.

The district will monitor the level of seriousness of these issues as we have done in the past. Our schools will also follow the cleaning protocols for disinfecting areas where these germs may spread as part of their normal routines.

Like most things in our community and school, partnerships and collaboration usually bring about improvement. With your help, we can provide a healthier environment for all our children. Thank you for partnering with us in this effort.

Sincerely,



Jon Stratton, Assistant Superintendent

## Parents: Learn the Facts about Enterovirus D68



Every year, millions of children in the United States get enterovirus infections that can cause coughing, sneezing, and fever. This year, children throughout the country have gotten sick with respiratory illnesses caused by enterovirus D-68 (EV-D68). EV-D68 is one of many enteroviruses that often spread in the summer and fall. It's not a new virus, but it hasn't been very common in the past. However, this year, EV-D68 is the most common enterovirus that's going around.

Since you may not have heard of EV-D68 before, better understanding of how to prevent the virus and the symptoms that this virus can cause can help you protect your children.

### What are the signs and symptoms of EV-D68?

Most children who get infected with EV-D68 may have cold-like symptoms, like fever, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, and body and muscle aches. More severe symptoms include wheezing and difficulty breathing. Children with asthma are at risk for severe symptoms from EV-D68.

### How can I protect my children?

You can help protect yourself and others from respiratory illnesses, including EV-D68, by following these steps:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils, with people who are sick, or when you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or shirt sleeve, not your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick
- Stay home when you are sick and keep sick children home from school

### Could my child get EV-D68?

EV-D68 spreads when people infected with the virus cough, sneeze, or touch surfaces that are then touched by others. In general, infants, children, and teenagers are at higher risk than adults for getting infected and sick with enteroviruses like EV-D68. That's because they have not been exposed to these types of viruses before, and they do not yet have immunity (protection) built up to fight the disease. If your child has asthma, he or she may be at greater risk for severe respiratory illness from EV-D68.

If your child has asthma, CDC recommends you do the following to help maintain control of your child's asthma during this time:

- Discuss and update your child's asthma action plan with your child's doctor (usually pulmonologist or pediatrician).
- Make sure your child takes prescribed asthma medications as directed, especially long term control medication(s).

- Make sure your child knows to keep asthma reliever medication with him or her or has access to it at all times.
- Get your child a flu vaccine, since flu can trigger an asthma attack.
- If your child develops new or worsening asthma symptoms, follow the steps in his or her asthma action plan. If your symptoms do not go away, call your child's doctor right away.
- Make sure caregiver(s) and/or teacher(s) are aware of the child's condition, and that they know how to help if the he or she experiences any symptoms related to asthma.
- Call your child's doctor if he or she is having difficulty breathing, if you feel you are unable to control symptoms, or if symptoms are getting worse.

### **Summary**

There is no specific treatment for EV-D68. Talk to your child's doctor about the best way to control his or her symptoms.

Remember, that while this has been a big year for EV-D68 infections, CDC expects the number of cases to taper off by late fall. But even after cases of EV-D68 begin to decrease, parents and children should continue to follow basic steps to stay healthy, such as frequent hand washing and avoiding touching their faces with unwashed hands. To help your family stay healthy this fall and winter, CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get an annual flu vaccine.

For more information on EV-D68, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about/EV-D68.html>.