

## Preparing for the seasonal flu and the possibility of pandemic flu



Along with health and government organizations across the state, the PCR-3 School District is preparing for both the normal seasonal flu as well as the possibility of a pandemic flu. Pandemic flu is similar to the seasonal flu but is caused by a new influenza virus that has not previously circulated so that it is more easily spread. The last pandemic was the Hong Kong flu in 1968, and many experts believe we are due for another pandemic flu in the near future.

All influenza viruses are mainly transmitted from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A lesser mode of transmission occurs when a person touches something that has the flu virus on it and then touches his or her mouth, eyes or nose.

A few tips that will help children and adults avoid the flu and keep from spreading the disease include:

- Practice frequent hand washing using soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. You may also use hand sanitizer when it is difficult to wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes because the virus can spread when your hands touch surfaces infested with germs.
- Remember to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing. If a tissue is not available, you are encouraged to sneeze or cough into the upper portion of your shirt sleeve and avoid sneezing or coughing into your hands (which are more likely to touch surfaces and other people and spread the disease).
- Do not share drinks, water bottles, eating utensils or cell phones with others.
- Practice "social distancing," especially in the case of a pandemic. Stand at least three feet away from others if you or the other person is infected with the flu.
- If you are sick with the flu, stay home to prevent spreading it to others at school and in the workplace.
- If possible, get a flu shot.

**How do you tell the difference between the common cold and the flu?** If you have a stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and a hacking cough, you probably have a cold. If you have a high fever, extreme tiredness, a dry cough and severe headache, muscle and body aches, you probably have the flu.