

# INFLUENZA A FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Flu Fact Sheet

Just a reminder that flu season is here and that several members of the school community have been infected with Influenza A.

### What is influenza?

Influenza, or flu, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. There are three main types of influenza virus that cause infection in humans – types A, B and C – and many sub-types or strains. Influenza can occur throughout the year but influenza activity usually peaks in winter.

Influenza is a vaccine-preventable illness but a new vaccine needs to be given each year because influenza viruses change (mutate) constantly. A new influenza vaccine is prepared each year to best match the strains predicted for the coming influenza season.

### What are the symptoms?

People with influenza typically experience some or all of the following symptoms for at least a week:

- fever and chills
- cough, sore throat and runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches, joint pains, headaches and fatigue (feeling very tired)
- nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea (more common in children than adults)

Some symptoms may last for more than a week. Some people may also experience very mild symptoms, particularly if they have some immunity from a previous infection or vaccination.

Seek immediate medical advice if the illness quickly becomes worse or if any of the following occurs:

- shortness of breath or rapid breathing
- chest pain
- confusion or sudden dizziness
- persistent vomiting.

### How is it spread?

- Influenza viruses are mainly spread by droplets made when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Influenza can also spread after touching surfaces where infected droplets have landed
- Influenza can be spread to someone by an infected person even before their symptoms begin
- Adults with influenza are infectious from the day before their symptoms start until 5-7 days later
- Young children and people with weakened immune systems may be infectious for longer.

### Take action to stop the spread of influenza by remembering to:

- **Cover your face when you cough or sneeze** and throw used tissues in a rubbish bin
- **Wash your hands thoroughly and often.** Wash hands for at least 10 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose, or use an alcohol-based hand rub
- **Stay at home until you're well.** Wait at least 24 hours after your fever resolves so you that you aren't likely to infect other people. Keep sick children away from school and other activities
- **Call ahead to see a doctor.** If you think you may have influenza and you need to see a doctor, remember to call first so the clinic can take precautions to reduce the risk to other people.