



DAMASCUS HIGH SCHOOL

25921 Ridge Road

Damascus, Maryland 20872

301-253-7030 Fax: 301-253-7046

October 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are entering the time of year when we see more incidences of Influenza (flu) and other illnesses in our school. We take the health and well-being of our students seriously and work very hard to keep these viruses from spreading. With flu season upon us and recent media reports about other infections, such as Enterovirus D68 and Pertussis (whooping cough), I want to let you know what steps we are taking to keep our school community healthy and how you can help us in that effort.

Respiratory infections, such as colds, flu, Pertussis and Enteroviruses are spread when people come in close contact with sick individuals and inhale airborne droplets, or come in direct contact with contaminated surfaces. Each day, the staff of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), in collaboration with School Health Services, takes steps to prevent the spread of infections in our schools.

At our school, we regularly clean and sanitize frequently touched areas, such as door knobs, stair rails, telephones, computer keyboards, and bathroom faucets and fixtures. We also encourage our students and staff to—

- Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, especially before eating and after using the bathroom;
- Cover coughs with a disposable tissue or cough into their sleeve;
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth;
- Avoid hugging and close contact with sick individuals;
- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils; and, most importantly;
- Stay home when sick.

Parents can help us maintain a healthy school environment in a variety of ways, including reinforcing all of the above behaviors as well as—

- Making sure children get plenty of exercise, sleep, and healthy food;
- Keeping sick children at home, especially if they have a fever above 100°F or have symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, or a severe cough;
- Making sure children receive recommended immunizations and an annual flu vaccine. You will be receiving notification of upcoming free flu clinics in MCPS—please take advantage of this opportunity to protect the health of your child and others.

Since some of the infections mentioned in this letter can have serious respiratory symptoms, please notify your healthcare provider if your child has cold-like symptoms accompanied by difficulty breathing or a new onset of wheezing. If your child has asthma, please make sure our health room has a copy of your child's Asthma Action Plan and, if needed, an inhaler.

I know that many of you have also been hearing reports about the spread of the Ebola virus around the globe. Ebola is a rare illness that is only spread by direct contact with infected blood and body fluids. Federal, state, and local health officials are closely monitoring the situation and, as always, we will follow their guidance should it become an issue in our area.

The Centers for Disease Control website has a tremendous amount of information about the viruses and infections mentioned in this letter. Simply go to www.cdc.gov, and click on "Diseases & Conditions" or enter a keyword in the search box. Information is available in Spanish at www.cdc.gov/spanish/.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our school community health nurse, Joann Sarver at 301-253-7051.

Sincerely,


Principal


School Community Health Nurse