



# BEDFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

310 South Bridge Street  
Bedford, VA. 24523

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February 24, 2017

FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND SCHOOL STAFF

## **Influenza Update and Other Health Information**

### Key Facts about Influenza (FLU)

Virginia is currently experiencing large numbers of influenza. Historically, the month of February has traditionally been the peak flu season time.

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Fever and body aches are also common.

- Droplets made when someone with the flu coughs, sneezes or talks mainly spread the flu.
- A person can pass the flu to someone else **before** knowing that they are sick, as well as while they are sick.
- The onset of symptoms from the time a person is exposed to when they actually get sick varies from 1 to 4 days. So closing schools is not always the answer.

Bedford County Public Schools' flu cases are currently average to slightly above average in a few schools. The school nurses are tracking all health conditions from clinic visits and parent reports.

Communication from parents regarding their child's illness is important to protect everyone. There are varieties of illnesses on any given day.

### Reasons why the numbers seem high in our surrounding areas:

- The flu mist (nasal influenza spray) was not available for student administration this year from the Virginia Department of Health, therefore, the number of people protected from the flu virus was much lower than usual.
- People do not always get an accurate diagnosis or they wait too long to see a doctor.
- The results of the rapid flu test are not always accurate: meaning that you could have a false positive or false negative.
- Flu viruses are constantly changing and the vaccines are prepared a year in advance, so the vaccine may not always provide protection from the virus.

We all play a role in reducing the spread of germs!!

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### Tips for Preventing or Reducing the Spread of Flu:

- Get a flu shot every year. The flu vaccine provides protection for four months. If you have not, had your flu shot it is not too late.
- Wash hands frequently, stay away from sick people, cover our mouths when coughing or sneezing, staying home when we are sick!
- Hand sanitizer **is not** as strong of a protective measure as washing hands during the flu season.
- Parents can help the schools by making sure communication occurs with the school nurse or secretary regarding their child's sickness no matter what type of illness.
- Having up to date emergency contact information and someone to pick your child up in a timely response is very important.
- Students who are ill must first be seen by the school nurse to determine if they need to go home. If the child is ill and requests to be picked up, please ask them to go see the nurse. This helps the school nurses track students that are going home because of illnesses that may be contagious.
- BCPS custodial staff have increased their frequency of cleaning doorknobs, faucets and general wipe down. After every transportation run, the bus seats are wiped.

Virginia has had a very mild winter allowing more illnesses to circulate in our community. Using good communication and practicing preventive measures will help improve the spread of germs and keep us all healthy!

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If you have any questions about illnesses in your child's school, please contact the school nurse.