

Saint Mary's School

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Dear Parents/Guardians of St. Mary's School Students:

As we settle into the new school year, the safety and well being of our children is paramount. I'd like to take this opportunity to update you with some new information, and refresh your minds regarding some standing safety measures.

The H1N1 Flu pandemic is of concern to all of us as we enter the coming months. The virus has continued to spread throughout the summer months, but fortunately its severity has not worsened. In an effort to meet the challenge of reducing its spread, we shall continue to focus on hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette, and keeping those who are ill away from those who are well. Wall-mounted hand sanitizer dispensers have been ordered and will be installed in all classrooms and common rooms after they are delivered. Students will receive age-appropriate instruction/review of proper hand washing, use of the sanitizer dispensers, cough/sneeze etiquette, and the prevention of the spread of germs. The cleaning crew will continue to work to keep the buildings clean, with special attention to "frequently touched common areas" such as doorknobs and banisters. As this is an evolving situation with frequently changing policies and protocols, we ask for your patience and understanding as we collaborate with local and state health departments, and the Archdiocese of Boston's Catholic Schools Office in order to institute the most effective measures to protect our children and their families.

The current health policy regarding Influenza-like Illness (ILI) is as follows:

- **Symptoms of the flu** are fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 Celcius) or greater, cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and fatigue. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **If your child has a fever** he/she must stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or signs of fever, without using fever reducing medications (Advil, Motrin, Tylenol, or any acetaminophen or ibuprofen containing products).
- **Please notify the school before school starts** if your child is going to be absent, and please state the reason.
- When your child returns to school it is **imperative** that he/she submits the absent form found in the Student Handbook. The form should be filled out completely. If a student returns to school without an absent form, the parent/guardian will be called and the student will remain in the nurse's office until an absent form is delivered to school.
- **Please do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. If they have flu symptoms, they will stay in the nurse's office wearing a mask while they wait for a parent or guardian to dismiss them.

Information regarding community based immunization clinics will be posted when available. It is projected that "Seasonal" flu vaccine will be available in September, and that H1N1 vaccine will be available in October.

For more information visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu.

In addition to the safety concerns presented by the H1N1 flu, I'd like to remind everyone of some basic safety concerns. Please remember to the following guidelines when dropping off/picking up your child from school:

- **Please use crosswalks at all times**, both when you arrive with your child, and when you depart after your child has entered the building. There are additional crosswalks (no crossing guards) located in front of the church at the intersection of Herbert St. and Myrtle St., and in front of the Jr. High for crossing Herbert St. Please remember that as adults, you are setting the example not only for your own child, but for the many children who observe your behavior.
- All children should exit their vehicle only after it has been parked appropriately. **It is not acceptable to pull over to the curb on school side of the street and drop off your child.** This is not only dangerous for your child, but it also creates a hazardous traffic situation behind you, endangering pedestrians using the crosswalk.
- No child under the age of 12 should ride in the front seat of a vehicle, and according to Massachusetts law, all children who have outgrown their traditional forward facing safety seat and are under age 8 **and** under 4'9" tall **must** ride in a booster seat. All children ages 8-12 are required to wear seatbelts.
- Please remember that helmets should always be worn when riding bikes, rollerblading, and skateboarding. Wearing a helmet is a simple measure that truly can prevent a tragedy from occurring.

Thank you for your cooperation and help with these important concerns. I'm looking forward to a safe and healthy year caring for your children at St. Mary's School.

Sincerely,

Terry Pedicini RN
St. Mary's School Nurse