

August 2009

Dear Parent:

Only a few months ago we were warning you about the novel H1N1 or "Swine" Flu. Unfortunately, we are starting school in much the same manner.

This novel flu is still circulating in Arizona and it appears that it is affecting our younger population at a disproportionately higher rate than our normal "seasonal" flu. The Maricopa County Department of Public Health reports that more than half of those hospitalized have been school or pre-school aged children, and confirms one pediatric death this summer in our county attributed to novel H1N1. Many more cases are possible this fall. Because of this, we all need to become much more vigilant in our efforts to keep our school community and your home environment flu-free.

- 1.) **Teach your kids good hygiene (we will be doing the same at school):**  
This means teaching them how to cover coughs/sneezes with their elbows, good hand washing habits and to keep their hands away from their face.
- 2.) **Keep your kids home when they are sick:** When a child comes to school sick, he/she can infect classmates at amazing rates. If too many kids are sick at school, we may be required to implement extreme measures such as closing the school, which has a negative effect on all of us.
- 3.) **Consider seasonal flu vaccine:** Although there won't be a vaccine for the novel flu until later this fall, our regular seasonal flu vaccine should be available in September. The more students (and staff) who are vaccinated with seasonal flu vaccine, the better chance we have of keeping this virus from jumping from child to child in our school and then bringing it home to your family. If your primary care doctor does not have flu vaccine, contact Community Information and Referral at 602-263-8856 for vaccine locations.

We are monitoring both the novel and seasonal flu closely and will be reporting abnormal absentee rates in our school to the Maricopa County Department of Public Health. However, we cannot stress enough that it will be our parents who will ultimately make the largest impact on the health of our school.

Please contact us should you need further assistance in dealing with this emerging public health threat.

SINCERELY,



Don Hiemstra  
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Grayhawk Elementary School



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