



November 18, 2022

Dear students, families, and staff,

Multiple illnesses are spreading this fall and winter, and they can be especially hard on children. Your schools and local public health are striving to keep kids healthy and out of the hospital, and we rely on the support of families.

We're hearing from schools, child cares, and healthcare providers that there has been a large increase in children getting sick, compared to the last couple of years. This same increase in illnesses is being seen around the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Respiratory syncytial virus – more often called RSV – is circulating at very high rates. At the same time, the flu is spreading, and we expect to see very high levels of that illness, as well. COVID continues to spread at lower levels than in the last few years, but is expected to increase this winter.

These illnesses can cause serious problems and hospitalization. This is overwhelming for the healthcare system. Very few beds are available in hospitals at this time for children, and we want to do everything we can to keep kids healthy.

Multiple respiratory illnesses have the same symptoms. Without testing for diseases like COVID or flu, it can be hard to know what your child may be sick with if they start showing symptoms. No matter what the illness is, it's best not to spread it. It is also important for your child to rest and recover for their own health. Please keep them home if they aren't feeling well.

Please support your school staff as they work hard to keep kids safe and healthy. No one wants students to miss school, but it's important that they stay home if they are sick so they don't spread a virus that may make others in their classes or on their team seriously ill.

Thank you for your support and dedication to keeping children and families in Snohomish County healthy.

James Lewis, MD, MPH
Health Officer
Snohomish Health District

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Everyone 6 months and older should be vaccinated against the flu, and stay up to date with COVID vaccination including the bivalent booster. This greatly lowers the chance of getting sick enough to need a hospital. Talk to your doctor if you're not sure what vaccines you need.

If you, your child, or anyone in your household has symptoms such as coughing, sore throat, sneezing, headache, runny nose, body aches, fatigue, wheezing, difficulty breathing, or fever, they should stay home from school, work, and other activities. This includes sports, child care, events or parties.

Wait until fever is gone without the help of medicine for more than one full day, and other symptoms are gone or getting better. If your child tests positive for COVID-19, please have them stay home until at least five days after the positive test or start of symptoms and wear a mask for at least an additional 5 days after coming out of isolation.

Children should wash their hands often and well, and should cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or their elbow. You or your child also may choose to wear a mask in shared public spaces.

If your child has underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk, talk to their doctor about additional preventive measures or what to do if they become ill with symptoms like a bad cough or high fever. They may need antiviral treatment to help reduce the severity of the illness.