

PANDEMIC FLU FAQs

What is a Pandemic flu?

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of flu disease that occurs when a new type of influenza virus appears that people have not been exposed to before (or have not been exposed to in a long time). The pandemic virus can cause serious illness because people do not have immunity to the new virus. Pandemics are different from seasonal outbreaks of influenza that we see every year. Seasonal influenza is caused by influenza virus types to which people have already been exposed. Its impact on society is less severe than a pandemic, and influenza vaccines are available to help prevent widespread illness from seasonal flu.

A pandemic will last much longer than most flu outbreaks and may include "waves" or cycles of influenza activity that last 6-8 weeks separated by months. Public health officials will not know how severe a pandemic will be until it begins.

Why is it important to be prepared?

The goal of The Pandemic Flu Plan for Cypress-Fairbanks ISD is to take steps to protect staff and students from a possible influenza outbreak of any kind and to assist our administrators, principals and department heads in preparing for a health-related emergency. Preparation will lessen the effects of a pandemic and will help to bring peace of mind and confidence for our staff, students, and families to deal with the emergency.

Who helps CFISD make decisions regarding Pandemic Flu?

The CFISD response plan regarding Pandemic Flu is directed by the Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES). HCPHES has supervisory authority and control over the administration of communicable disease control measures for schools in Harris county. While a few of the CFISD schools are in the Houston city limits, CFISD will be following the recommendations of the county health department (HCPHES). The HCPHES *Pandemic Influenza and Highly Infectious Respiratory Diseases Plan*, is continually revised to reflect federal, state, and local planning. This plan can be accessed at www.harriscountyhealth.com. The Director of Health Services for CFISD has attended planning sessions with chief officers of HCPHES and received planning information, tools, and checklists that were utilized to prepare our school district.

What are some differences between seasonal flu and Pandemic Flu?

Seasonal Flu:

- Seasonal flu is caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already circulating among people.
- Symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny nose, and muscle pain.
- Deaths can be caused by complications such as pneumonia.
- The very young, the elderly, and those with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk for serious complications.
- Healthy adults usually are not at risk for serious complications.
- Every year in the United States, on average:
 - 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu.
 - More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications.

- About 36,000 people die from flu.

Pandemic Flu:

- Pandemic flu is caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before.
- It is likely to be more severe, affect more people, and cause more deaths than seasonal influenza because people will not have immunity to the new virus.
- The symptoms are similar to the common flu, but may be more severe and complications more serious.
- Healthy adults may be at increased risk for serious complications.
- The effects of a severe pandemic could be much more damaging than those of a regular flu season.
- It could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.
- Everyday life could be disrupted because so many people in so many places become seriously ill at the same time.
- Impacts could range from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and food delivery.

What can people do to help hold back the spread of the disease in our schools and community?

These steps may help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away immediately after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand cleaner.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, and social gatherings. In this way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

Public health actions may be used to contain the spread of a contagious disease. This would include the cancellation of large gatherings, such as athletic events, club meetings, and fine arts rehearsals. HCPHES will have the authority to close schools for a period of time if necessary.

How do I stay informed?

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD website – www.cfisd.net

An accurate source is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4536).

Other sources of up-to-date and reliable pandemic information are:

- Federal web site – www.pandemicflu.gov
- State web site – www.dshs.state.tx.us

How will I know if my child needs to stay home?

- Currently, any student or staff member with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher will be sent home. The student or staff member must remain home until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Students will need to be seen by the nurse upon

returning to school. The nurse will monitor the student's temperature to verify that the student is fever free prior to admission to school.