

Tips for a Healthy School Year

The purpose of this document is to provide general recommendations to schools in order to provide a safe and healthy environment for students and staff.

What Schools Can Do:

Be Prepared:

Consider stocking up on infection prevention and control supplies such as:

- Facial tissue
- Adult and child-size masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Disinfectant wipes
- Tests for illness

Implement plan to monitor illnesses:

- Consider creating tracking sheet to monitor whether students are sick from gastrointestinal illness, respiratory illness, or other ailments
- If your school has never been part of the school absenteeism surveillance system, please contact your local health department to enroll.

Implement plan regarding blood and body fluid spills:

- Instruct staff about [bloodborne pathogens](#)
- Stock personal protective equipment
- Instruct staff on proper cleaning and disinfection of blood and body fluid spills

Improve ventilation and indoor air quality:

Ensure HVAC units have preventative maintenance and settings on ventilation.

Consider an update that includes use for smoke/air quality concerns.

Consider posting traffic flow guidance for periods of increased illness.

For schools that have portable HEPA machines:

- Ensure air filtration units are functional
- Air filtration filters of the appropriate size available and changed according to manufacturer's directions
- Placement guidance available (such as when to use, and where to place in classroom)

Implement Advanced Control Measures During Periods of Increased Infections:

Consider the following measures if an outbreak occurs or if 10% or more of students are absent:

- Contact [local health department](#) for assistance
- Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection
- Limit traffic flow
- Use portable HEPA filter machines in classrooms or other areas
- Screen for symptoms of illness & decide on exclusion directives related to infection and/or symptoms
- Test for specific illness (for example, sending a test home with a symptomatic student)
- Support use of masks by staff members and/or students
 - Prioritize for people with symptoms or who may be immunodeficient

Tips for a Healthy School Year

What Staff and Students Can Do:

Wash your hands! One of the most important ways staff and children can stay healthy is keeping their hands clean throughout the day. School programs promoting hand hygiene result in fewer missed days of school due to illness.

Hand Hygiene:

- Decide on when and where to post signage.
- Check out handwashing posters made by Nebraska students.
- Stock up on soap, supplies, paper towels.

Keep Up-To-Date on Vaccines:

Protect yourself and others by getting your flu and COVID-19 vaccines (find them at www.vaccines.gov).

For students, see [vaccine schedule for children](#).

- Refer students in need of immunizations to their [local health department](#) or [vaccines for children provider](#) if they are uninsured or under-insured.

For staff, see current recommendations for [adult immunizations](#), including [pneumococcal](#) and the [RSV](#) vaccine for adults 60 years of age and older.

Stay Home When Sick:

Students or staff can go back to their normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, both are true:

- Their symptoms are getting better overall, and
- They have not had a fever (and are not taking fever-reducing medication).

Further Information & Resources:

- ASHRAE: [School Technical Resources](#)
- DHHS: [Immunizations](#)
- DHHS: [Seasonal Respiratory Diseases](#)
- ICAP: [Kids Health Zone: Hand Hygiene](#)
- ICAP: [Kids Health Zone: Ventilation](#)
- NDE: [School Health Services - Nebraska Department of Education](#)
- US EPA: [Creating Healthy Indoor Air Quality in Schools](#)

Andrea Riley
School Health Liaison
State School Nurse Consultant
anriley@childrensnebraska.org