

# Increased Absenteeism Continues

November 2, 2009

Our district continues to experience increased absent rates at several schools, and the majority of symptoms being reported are consistent with flu-like illness. We will continue to monitor student and staff absenteeism and follow Health Department guidelines for reporting illnesses.

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department also continues to receive reports of increased absence rates in schools across the county, and it is likely that the majority of the absences are due to H1N1 influenza. The Health Department advises that the H1N1 virus is expected to be circulating in schools and is very contagious among school children because they do not have immunity to it. Very few cases of H1N1 influenza are actually confirmed by laboratory testing so the school district will not be sending home notification letters to parents about possible influenza cases in each school.

Our staff will continue to teach and model healthy practices to prevent the spread of illness including frequent hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes. Parents are encouraged to keep ill students home until they are fully recovered. When calling in to excuse a student's absence, please include the symptoms (fever, cough, vomiting, headache, stomachache) in your recorded message.

For more information:

- [\(English\) Center for Disease Control flu prevention brochure](#)
- [\(Spanish\) Center for Disease Control flu prevention brochure](#)
- [\(English\) Department of Health brochure for children with special health care needs](#)