## Flu season is coming so learn how to protect yourself and others…don’t let the flu get you down

## According to Toronto Public Health, almost 20% of us will get the flu (influenza) this year. The flu is responsible for approximately 12,000 hospitalizations and 3,500 deaths in Canada each year. Because the flu spreads easily, you can become infected or infect others if you are not careful. “Flu season” will hit its peak between late fall and early spring so now is the time to prepare.

At the TDSB, a large number of workers are in close contact with children and in these types of environments, germs can spread easily. Help keep the flu at bay in the workplace by following these **best practices whenever possible:**

* **Get the flu shot**- it’s the best defence against contracting the flu and will help protect you, your family and everyone you come in contact with during the day. Flu shots must be updated every year because their effectiveness wears off and because strains of the virus can change annually. Free flu clinics are set up each season so go online to <http://health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/publichealth/flu/finder.aspx> and find a clinic near you.
* **Wash your hands**- even if you get the flu shot, washing your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds will help prevent the spread of the virus which can live on your hands for up to 3 hours.
* **Sneeze into your sleeve**- avoid sneezing or coughing into your hands. If you do…wash them promptly. Use a tissue if possible but if you don’t have one, use your sleeve.
* **Avoid contact with those who already have the flu**- avoid close contact with those who are already sick or those who seem to be unwell.
* **See a doctor-** if you are not feeling better after a few days or if your symptoms get worse. Review the following chart and know whether you have the flu or cold. You can also speak to a nurse by calling Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 (24hrs/day 7 days/week).



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| **Symptom** | **Cold** | **Flu** |
| **Fever** | **Rare** | **Common; starts suddenly and lasts 3-4 days; not everyone with flu will have a fever** |
| **General Aches/Pains** | **Sometimes, mild** | **Common, often severe** |
| **Muscle Aches** | **Sometimes, usually mild** | **Often, can be severe** |
| **Feeling tired and weak** | **Sometimes, mild** | **Common, may last 2-3 weeks or more** |
| **Fatigue (extreme tiredness)** | **Unusual** | **Common, starts early** |
| **Sneezing** | **Common** | **Sometimes** |
| **Complications** | **Can lead to sinus congestion or ear ache** | **Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure in worst cases and can worsen a chronic respiratory illness; can be life threatening** |
| **Chest discomfort and/or coughing** | **Sometimes, mild to moderate** | **Common, can become severe** |

**Ensure your school has handwashing signs posted in each washroom….spread the word…not the flu.**

**For more information on the flu or to obtain signs, please visit the Occupational Health and Safety webpage or call**

 **416-397-3210. Information is adapted from TPH website.**

 ***Work Safe by Working Smart!***