

## Richmond Consolidated School

1831 State Road  
Richmond, MA 01254-5100  
(413) 698-2207  
(413) 698-3199 *facsimile*

*Jill Pompei, Principal*

Dear RCS Community,

We hope your summer is going well and everyone is staying healthy. As you are reading through this lengthy letter, please know how much we appreciate the time, care and concern you have not only for your child(ren) but also the entire RCS community at large. We all have one goal in mind, to open school in the safest way possible. By now, you have received the home survey via email; we strongly hope that you will complete this, as this will have an impact on our school year. We continue to work closely with local and state health officials along with national guidance on prevention and school management during this pandemic. We are sharing this information so you are aware and can help reduce the spread of infection. The following practices are extremely important for all students and adults:

- Do not bring your student to school if they do not feel well or have cold or flu-like symptoms (elevated temperature, fever, cough, shortness of breath). **Keep your student home and call their primary care provider to discuss symptoms for further care.**
- Do not come to work at the school if you do not feel well or have cold or flu-like symptoms (elevated temperature, fever, cough, shortness of breath). **Stay home and call your primary care provider to discuss symptoms for further care.**
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If you do not have soap and water, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Sneeze and cough into a tissue, elbow or sleeve instead of your hands. Throw used tissues in a garbage container immediately after use. If you use your hands to cover a sneeze or cough, wash your hands immediately with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid rubbing your eyes and touching your nose.
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.

If your child develops a fever (for school purposes fever is 100.4 F) or you think your child might have a fever, please keep him or her home until the fever has been gone for 24 hours with no medications. That means, if your child has a fever in the morning, s/he should remain home at least until the following morning. Sometimes it is difficult to decide in the morning whether a child is well enough to attend school. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me when in doubt. You can also ask yourself, "Can my child go through the day with minimal disruption to himself and others?" This may help you make a decision on one of those mornings when it is difficult to decide. We know that it is stressful for you as a parent and your child as a student to miss school, and we know that fever can last a long time, but it is imperative that this 24-hour period be observed to assure that your child is healthy and ready to return to school.

Keeping a virus out of our environment is important to the health of our entire school and extended community. The Centers for Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of

Health also recommend the flu shot as the best way to prevent flu. It is recommended that everyone get the flu shot by late October. We had one of the deadliest flu seasons in over 40 years in 2018, with 80% of the pediatric deaths occurring in kids who had not been vaccinated. Children, who have endured fewer flu seasons than adults, have less natural immunity to the virus and get more benefit from the vaccine. The more adults who are vaccinated, the more children who are protected, as they are less likely to be exposed at home or school. In addition, if you are notified that your child has a fever and needs to be picked up, please try and come within the hour to take your child home. This is for the comfort of your child as well as to limit the time of exposure to other children and staff.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Baker-Polito Administration announced new COVID-19 public health guidelines on travel. As you know, the situation is rapidly changing. Due to this reason, we wanted to keep you updated on this guidance as you are contemplating travel close to the first day of school. Please note: All travelers arriving to Massachusetts – **including Massachusetts residents returning home** – are instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days, except that, travelers from Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, and New Jersey arriving in Massachusetts are exempt from this directive and need not self-quarantine for 14 days. In addition, workers designated by the federal government as essential critical infrastructure workers are exempt from the directive to self-quarantine for 14 days if traveling to Massachusetts for work purposes. All persons are instructed not to travel to Massachusetts if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19. Also, if a close contact of an individual who is infected will be instructed by their public health nurse to be tested for COVID-19 asap and to quarantine for a total of 14 days. Testing is now important for all close contacts.

Also, here are a few reminders as you begin to think about preparing for the start of school; students entering Pre-K, Kindergarten, 4th grade, and 7th grade are required to submit a recent (within the past 12 months) physical exam and updated immunization record to the school health office. Please note, there is a new updated Meningococcal Conjugate vaccine for the school year for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. Those students with Immunization Exemptions must submit a letter or form annually to be in compliance with Massachusetts Public Health requirements. Students with chronic health issues, please update the school health office with current Emergency Action Plans, as well as medication orders for the 2020-2021 school year, should your student require any prescription medications to be administered at school.

Attached are many important resources you may find helpful in the event the situation is applicable to your family. They include information on how to self-quarantine and self-isolate, the importance of the Flu Vaccine, MenACWY informational sheet and a comparison of symptoms of COVID-19, the flu, a cold and allergies. As always, please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jill Pompei, Principal

Cristina Lenfest, BSN, RN

Richmond Consolidated School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness

**Stay Home – Stay Safe**  
**Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**  
**How to Self-quarantine and Self-isolate**

**If you are not sick but are:**

- a close contact to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or
- recently returned from any travel outside Massachusetts,

**please take these steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19.**

**Self-quarantine: Separate yourself from others in case you get sick**

1. Stay at home and use a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible.
2. Do your best to stay at least 6 feet away from other people in the house.
3. Do **not** leave your house to go to school, work or run errands.
4. Do **not** have any visitors to your house during this time.
5. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
6. Do not share eating or drinking utensils with anybody.
7. Monitor your health every day.
8. If you need to seek routine medical care call ahead to your doctor and tell them you are under COVID-19 quarantine.
9. Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares to get to your appointment.

**Monitor your health every day:**

- Do health checks every morning and every night or anytime you feel like you might have a fever
- Take your temperature
- Be alert for any symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough or shortness of breath.

**If you have a medical emergency, call 911. Tell them your symptoms and that you are being monitored for COVID-19.**

**How to determine your last day of exposure:**

Your last day of exposure is:

- The last time you were within 6 ft of someone confirmed to have COVID-19, or
- The day you arrived home after travel

**If you do not show signs of COVID-19 for 14 days after the last time you were exposed, your self-quarantine period is finished.**

### **If you:**

- **get sick during self-quarantine, or**
- **are sick and a healthcare provider tests you for COVID-19, or**
- **are told by a healthcare provider that you have COVID-19,**

**take these steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19.**

### **Self-isolation:** Separate yourself from others to keep your germs from spreading

1. If you get sick with fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other signs of respiratory illness, call your healthcare provider and tell them if you have been exposed to COVID-19.
2. If you need see your healthcare provider, do **not** take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares to get to your appointment.
3. Stay at home and use a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible.
4. Stay at least 6 feet away from other people in the house.
5. Do **not** leave your house to go to school, work or run errands.
6. Do **not** have any visitors to your house during this time.
7. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
8. Do not share eating or drinking utensils with anybody.
9. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
10. Clean surfaces that you touch every day with a household disinfectant.
11. Make a list of everyone you have been close to (within 6 feet of for at least 15 minutes), since you first got sick. Those people have been exposed to COVID-19 and should be asked to self-quarantine.

**If you have a medical emergency, call 911. Tell them your symptoms and that you have, or may have, COVID-19.**

### **How long do you need to isolate?**

For most people who have relatively mild illness, you will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 7 days. You can resume public activities once you have:

- gone for three days without a fever (and without taking fever-reducing medications like Tylenol), and
- experienced improvement in your other symptoms (for example, your cough has gotten much better).

**More information about how to self-isolate is available on the [CDC website](#)**

**If you have questions about isolation or quarantine, you can call your Local Board of Health or the Department of Public Health's On-call Epidemiologists at 617-983-6800.**

# The Flu:

## A Guide for Parents



### Flu Information

#### What is the flu?

Influenza (the flu) is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses that are constantly changing. Flu causes illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States each year. Flu can be very dangerous for children. Each year about 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized from flu complications, like pneumonia.

#### How serious is the flu?

Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. Flu can be especially dangerous for young children and children of any age who have certain long term health conditions, including asthma (even mild or controlled), neurological conditions, chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorders, endocrine disorders (such as diabetes), and weakened immune systems due to disease or medication. Children with these conditions, and those receiving long-term aspirin therapy, can have more severe illness from the flu.

#### How does the flu spread?

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get the flu by touching something that

has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

#### What are the symptoms of flu?

Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people with flu will not have a fever.

#### How long can a sick person spread the flu?

People with the flu may infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after. Children and people with weakened immune systems can shed virus for longer, and might still be contagious past 7 days, especially if they still have symptoms.

### IMPORTANT:

#### Can my child go to school, daycare or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children or to caregivers.

#### When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone, without using fever-reducing medications, like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil). A fever is defined as 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.

### Protect Your Child

#### How can I protect my child against flu?

The first and most important thing to do is to get flu vaccine for your child, yourself, and everyone else in your household **every year**. Get the vaccine as soon as it is available.

- Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.
- It's especially important that young children and children with certain health conditions (see at left) get vaccinated.
- It's very important for parents, grandparents, teachers and caregivers to get vaccinated.
- Everyone caring for infants under 6 months (who are too young to be vaccinated) should be vaccinated if possible. Vaccinating pregnant women can offer some protection to the baby during pregnancy and after birth.



## About Flu Vaccine

### What are the benefits of the flu vaccine?

- Flu vaccine helps protect the person vaccinated from the flu.
- Flu vaccine can make your illness milder if you do get sick and reduces the risk of hospitalizations and deaths.
- Flu vaccine keeps you from spreading the flu to your family and friends. This is particularly important to protect those who are most vulnerable, such as:
  - » Those at greatest risk of getting seriously ill from flu, like older adults, people with chronic health conditions and young children.
  - » Infants younger than 6 months old who are too young to get vaccinated.

### Is influenza vaccine effective?

Yes. While no vaccine is 100% effective, influenza vaccine is the best protection against getting the flu.

Influenza vaccine tends to be most effective in people who are younger and healthy. It takes about two weeks after vaccination to protect against flu, so vaccination does not protect immediately. Also, flu

viruses are always changing, so the vaccine needs to be updated every year, before flu season starts. When the vaccine isn't a good match with flu viruses that are circulating, it offers less protection.

### Are there any risks from flu vaccine?

Vaccine reactions, if they occur, are usually mild and can include soreness, redness and swelling where the shot is given. Some people have experienced fever, body aches, headache and fatigue. These reactions usually begin soon after the vaccine is given, and last 1-2 days.

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause more serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of a vaccine causing serious harm is **extremely small**.

Life threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

More detailed information about flu vaccine is available at [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis). At this site you will find Vaccine Information Statements about influenza vaccines designed to educate and inform in many languages.



## Other Steps to Take

### What else can I do to protect my child?

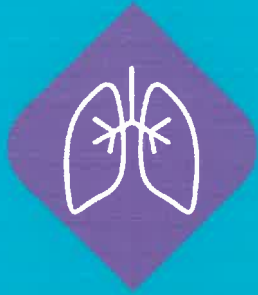
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
- Contact your healthcare provider if your child gets sick, especially if the child is very young (under 5) or has long-term health conditions.
- Seek emergency care if your child has trouble breathing, fast breathing, turns bluish or gray, has severe or persistent vomiting, has trouble waking up, or doesn't interact normally.

### Much more information is available at:

[www.mass.gov/flu](http://www.mass.gov/flu)  
[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)  
[www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org)

Or call (617) 983-6800 or your local board of health.





# People with Asthma Need to Take Precautions to **AVOID THE FLU**



The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. It can also cause death in severe cases. The flu can affect your lungs when you have asthma. It can cause inflammation (swelling) and narrowing of your airways. These changes could trigger asthma symptoms, an asthma episode or an asthma attack. If you have asthma, defending yourself against the flu is very important.

Most healthy people recover from the flu without problems. Having asthma puts you at risk of serious health problems from the flu.

## The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) has advice for fighting the flu if you have asthma.



**Get the flu shot every fall.** Flu season begins in the fall and continues through the spring. Get the actual shot, not the nasal spray vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine can trigger asthma symptoms. The flu shot is safe. If you have asthma, the risks are far greater not getting the vaccine. It takes about two weeks after getting the vaccine for your body to create protective antibodies to the flu virus.



**Make it a family affair.** Have family members without asthma get the flu vaccine to protect those that do have asthma.



**Prevent exposure.** The flu can be very contagious. Properly wash your hands often and don't share food or utensils. If possible, avoid people who are sick.



**Talk to your health care provider.** Update your Asthma Action Plan with your health care provider so that you know what to do if you get sick.



**If you get sick with flu symptoms, call your doctor immediately.** People with asthma can quickly become sicker with the flu. Your doctor may recommend treatment with an antiviral medicine or a change to your regular asthma treatment.

## COMMON FLU SYMPTOMS

The flu usually starts suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- **Fever (often very high, 101 or above)**
- **Headache**
- **Extreme tiredness, chills**
- **Constant cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny or stuffy nose**
- **Body aches in bones and/or muscles**



Diarrhea and vomiting can occur, but are more common in children. These symptoms are referred to as “flu-like symptoms.” Many different illnesses like the common cold, allergy symptoms and asthma symptoms can sometimes be similar and confusing. Visit or talk with your doctor to get a proper diagnosis.

## You can spread the flu before you even know you’re sick.

Unlike asthma, the flu is contagious. The flu spreads from coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person. You can also get the flu by touching something with the flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose. *This is why preventing the flu by getting a flu vaccine is important.*

## EMERGENCY SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU

Seek emergency medical help right away if you show these signs:



### In children:

- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Blue skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not being conscious
- Being irritable and difficult to comfort
- Flu-like symptoms seem to improve but return with worse fever and cough
- Fever with a rash

### In adults:

- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Pain in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

## The flu vaccine is safe for those with an egg allergy.

Studies show that an egg allergy is no longer a reason to avoid the flu vaccine. These studies looked at people with different types of reactions to egg and found a low chance of severe allergic reaction. It is safe for ALL people with an egg allergy to receive a flu vaccine. This is true no matter how severe your egg allergy was in the past. This includes anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) to egg.





# New Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine (MenACWY) Requirement for School Entry

Starting in the 2020-21 school year, all students entering Grades 7 and 11 will need meningococcal conjugate vaccine, MenACWY (brand names *Menveo* or *Menactra*) for school entry.

**Grade 7 entry:** 1 dose of MenACWY for all students.

**Grade 11 entry:** 1 booster dose of MenACWY received on or after 16 years of age. (1 or more doses of MenACWY are acceptable as long as 1 dose was received on or after 16 years of age.)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why require meningococcal conjugate vaccine?

MA school requirements generally follow the recommendations of the national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). ACIP recommends that children receive a dose of MenACWY at 11-12 years and a booster dose at 16 years.

### What if a student is not 16 at the start of Grade 11?

Students who are not 16 when they enter Grade 11 will need a booster dose once they turn 16.

### What if my school has ungraded classrooms?

In ungraded classrooms, Grade 7 requirements apply to all students  $\geq 12$  years and Grade 11 requirements apply to all students  $\geq 16$  years.

### Does the meningococcal vaccination waiver apply to the new requirement?

No. The waiver is for residential students only; however, students are allowed medical or religious exemptions.

### What about Meningococcal B Vaccine?

Men B vaccine (brand names *Bexsero* or *Trumenba*) does not satisfy the MenACWY requirement.

## School Immunization Surveys

### Will my school have to report on meningococcal vaccine in my Grade 7 immunization survey?

Yes. The Grade 7 survey will be updated for Fall 2020 to include a question about meningococcal vaccine for all students.

### I'm at a residential school. Will I still need to complete a separate residential survey in addition to my Grade 7 survey?

No. The residential school immunization survey will be incorporated into the Grade 7 survey.

### Will there be a Grade 11 immunization survey?

Yes. Similar to the Kindergarten and Grade 7 surveys, a Grade 11 survey will be accessible in the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) beginning in the 2020-21 school year. We anticipate the Grade 11 survey will open in January 2021 with a deadline for completion in March 2021.



Contact the Immunization Division at (617) 983-6800

Visit the MDPH website at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/school-immunizations>

# Stop the Spread of COVID-19



**WASH YOUR HANDS**  
often with soap and water for 20 seconds.



**USE HAND SANITIZER**  
with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol when handwashing is not available.



**WEAR A MASK**  
or fabric face covering.



**STAY AT LEAST 6 FEET APART.**



**STAY HOME IF YOU'RE SICK.**



Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

[aafa.org/covid19](http://aafa.org/covid19)

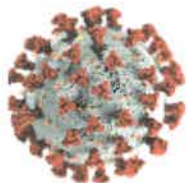
## IS IT COVID-19, THE FLU, A COLD OR ALLERGIES?

Symptoms	Coronavirus* (COVID-19) <small>Symptoms range from mild to severe</small>	Cold <small>Gradual onset of symptoms</small>	Flu <small>Abrupt onset of symptoms</small>	Seasonal Allergies <small>Abrupt onset of symptoms</small>
Length of symptoms	7-25 days	Less than 14 days	7-14 days	Several weeks
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (mild)	Common (usually dry)	Rare (usually dry unless it triggers asthma)
Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No**	No**	No**
Sneezing	No	Common	No	Common
Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes (usually mild)
Fever	Common	Short fever period	Common	No
Feeling tired and weak	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common	Sometimes (related to sinus pain)
Body aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common	No
Diarrhea	Sometimes	No	Sometimes for children	No
Chills/repeated shaking	Sometimes	No	Sometimes	No
Loss of taste or smell	Sometimes	Rare	Rare	Rare

Your symptoms may vary. \*Information is still evolving. \*\*Allergies, colds and flus can all trigger asthma, which can lead to shortness of breath. COVID-19 is the only one associated with shortness of breath on its own.

Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. edited 4/29/20 • [aafa.org/covid19](http://aafa.org/covid19)

# What you should know about COVID-19 to protect yourself and others



## Know about COVID-19

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has spread throughout the world.
- COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness.



## Know how COVID-19 is spread

- You can become infected by coming into close contact (about 6 feet or two arm lengths) with a person who has COVID-19. COVID-19 is primarily spread from person to person.
- You can become infected from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then by touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.



## Protect yourself and others from COVID-19

- There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with others.
- Wear a cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth in public settings.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



## Practice social distancing

- Buy groceries and medicine, go to the doctor, and complete banking activities online when possible.
- If you must go in person, stay at least 6 feet away from others and disinfect items you must touch.
- Get deliveries and takeout, and limit in-person contact as much as possible.



## Prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.
- Separate yourself from other people and pets in your home.
- There is no specific treatment for COVID-19, but you can seek medical care to help relieve your symptoms.
- If you need medical attention, call ahead.



## Know your risk for severe illness

- Everyone is at risk of getting COVID-19.
- Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more severe illness.



# Share facts about COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

FACT  
**1**

**Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.**

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

FACT  
**2**

**For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.**

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

FACT  
**3**

**Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.**

For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.

FACT  
**4**

**There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- When in public, wear a cloth face covering that covers your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

FACT  
**5**

**You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms, which can include:**

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Seek medical attention immediately if you or someone you love has emergency warning signs, including:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or not able to be woken
- Bluish lips or face

This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)