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Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you may already be aware, this year's flu season began early. Compared with last year, we are seeing more Harris County students absent from school with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat). Texas and the rest of the country are also reporting more cases of flu this year. We are writing this letter to you to share some ways that you can help to prevent flu in your child and family.

Recommendations

- 1. If you and your child have not already gotten your flu shots, please take your family to get it now. Everyone over the age of 6 months should get the flu shot each year,** except in very rare cases. This includes children, parents, grandparents, and all other members of the family. There are many places offering the flu shot, including the Harris County health department, most pharmacies, and most health clinics.
- 2. Follow these simple steps to help keep your child from getting the flu, or passing it on to others:**
 - **If you or your child gets sick, make sure to see your healthcare provider as soon as possible.** Your provider may want to do additional testing or prescribe medication that could help you get better. **Make sure to stay home until at least 24 hours after the fever goes away.** If taking medicine such as Tylenol to control fever, you must wait until the fever is gone for 24 hours *without* using medicine before returning to school or work.
 - Encourage sick family members to cover their nose and mouth when they cough and sneeze, using a tissue or bent arm. This helps keep germs from spreading to others.
 - Encourage family members to wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used.
 - Clean surfaces frequently such as desks, doorknobs, computer keyboards, faucet handles, and phones.

If your child gets sick, remember to keep them home and notify your school nurse. This will help us to keep everyone as healthy as possible during this flu season. Thank you for helping us keep our community well!

If you have any questions, please contact the Harris County Public Health Epidemiology Section at 713-439-6000. For more information on flu, please visit Harris County Public Health's website at: www.hcphtx.org. Also, like us on Facebook for up-to-date public health information.

Sincerely,
Natasha Wahab, MPH
Harris County Public Health Epidemiologist

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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