



## **2022-2023 Respiratory Illness Season: Guidance for Childcare Facilities and K-12 Schools**

Every year as the weather gets colder, we start to see more and more respiratory illnesses in our communities. This is particularly evident in childcare facilities and K-12 schools. Public health officials from Black Hawk, Linn, and Johnson counties have put together this document to guide staff in these settings toward the best way to prevent the spread of illness among attendees.

### **Common winter respiratory illnesses of concern for school and childcare settings:**

- [Influenza](#)
- [COVID-19](#)
- [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\)](#)
- [Human parainfluenza virus \(HPIV\)](#)
- [Adenovirus](#)
- [Pertussis](#) (whooping cough)
- [Parapertussis](#) (milder than whooping cough)
- [Human rhinovirus/enterovirus](#) (common cold)

### **Reportable Illnesses vs. Outbreaks:**

The above illnesses are commonly found on the respiratory panels ordered by medical providers. However, these illnesses are not all considered reportable illnesses in Iowa. When someone tests positive for a reportable illness, the appropriate local public health department is notified so that we can conduct an investigation and initiate any illness prevention actions (such as contact tracing or exclusion from childcare or school). To see a list of reportable illnesses go [here](#).

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services [Epi Manual](#) is an excellent resource to learn more about many common and/or reportable illnesses. The Epi Manual provides disease information, tips on controlling the spread of infection, fact sheets and templates for letters.

Even if an illness is not considered reportable, if a school or childcare facility is experiencing an outbreak of any illness, they should inform their local public health department. Additionally schools should continue to report 10% absenteeism [here](#). If you are seeing an increase in illness in your facility and you are not sure whether you are in the middle of an outbreak, or you're not sure how to move forward, please reach out to your local public health office. In these cases, public health can recommend illness prevention strategies as appropriate.

## Prevention strategies:

- Encourage vaccination of students and staff.
  - Information about recommended [adult](#) and [childhood](#) vaccines
  - Information about [influenza vaccines](#)
  - Information about [COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- The 3 C's:
  - Routinely **CLEAN** high touch surfaces and encourage hand washing
  - **COVER** coughs and sneezes with a tissue or a sleeve
  - **CONTAIN** germs by using social distancing, masking, or staying home
- Keep children home when sick
  - [Iowa HHS Child Illness and Exclusion Criteria](#)
  - This guidance provides facilities with the ability to use their discretion on when it is appropriate to exclude a child from attending.
  - Staff can discuss with parents/guardians whether the sick child:
    - Can participate in normal activities
    - Needs more care than the staff is able to provide
    - Has a significant change in behavior
- In outbreak situations, it is reasonable to scale up the level of prevention strategies being used in your facility, i.e. more frequent cleaning, contact tracing, stricter exclusion criteria, and closing rooms or facilities.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding an illness in your facility, please do not hesitate to reach out to your local public health department. We appreciate your collaboration and support with keeping our communities healthy!



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Linn County, Iowa**

