

Teacher's Guide January: Flu

**READY
NEW YORK**



Ah Choo! Stay Away From the Flu!

Flu season is underway. Teach your students the facts about the flu and what they can do to prevent its spread.

- Flu season typically starts in the fall and peaks in January or February.
- The seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus.
- Approximately 5% to 20% of U.S. residents get the flu each year.
- You can catch the flu when a person who is infected coughs, sneezes, or talks and droplets containing their germs land in your mouth or nose. You can also get the flu by touching an object that has the flu virus on it and then touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.
- New York City regularly monitors and responds to disease outbreaks. The “syndromic surveillance” system involves routinely tracing emergency room visits, ambulance runs, and pharmacy sales to provide early warnings of a possible outbreak.
- Seasonal flu is different from pandemic flu. Once you have had a particular strain of seasonal flu, you develop an immunity to it. However with pandemic flu, the virus changes radically. Flu vaccines are not effective against new pandemic strains of flu. In the 20th century, there were three pandemic flus: in 1918, 1957, and 1968. The H1N1 strain of flu became the first pandemic flu of the 21st century.



NYC

Department of Education
Emergency Management

How can you and your students protect yourselves from the flu?

- The best protection is the flu vaccine. It is available every year for people 6 months of age or older.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or sneeze into your sleeve instead of your hand.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, or nose.
- Stay away from others who are sick or who have flu symptoms. If you must be near them, follow the other precautions stringently.
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise, keep your stress level low, eat healthy food, and drink plenty of water.



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Reinforce the flu-prevention message and build skills across the curriculum with these simple activities:



Language Arts

One of the key ways to stay germ free is for students to wash their hands correctly. Instruct students to research correct hand-washing techniques and then write and illustrate an informative pamphlet or create a poster explaining correct techniques. If possible, distribute the pamphlets and posters to younger students.



Math

If 5% to 20% of U.S. residents get the flu each year, how many people in the City are likely to get the flu this year? How many in the county? In the state? If each of those people misses five days of school or work, what's the total amount of time they miss?

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FLU.GOV, www.flu.gov



Social Studies

Flu outbreaks affect more than just those who get sick. Discuss with your students how a disease outbreak affects various citizens, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, bus drivers, cooks, cashiers, and police officers. Then discuss how the actions we take—or don't take—to prevent the flu impact others in our families and community.



Science

Try this experiment to reinforce the idea that germs are all around us.

1. Divide the class into four groups. Provide each group with a plastic bag labeled as follows:
 - **Group one:** Control
 - **Group two:** Exposed to breath
 - **Group three:** Rubbed on surface
 - **Group four:** Exposed to hands
2. Line a table with waxed paper. Wash your hands thoroughly. Also wash a knife and a potato; then use the knife to slice the potato. Using a clean toothpick, give each group a potato slice.
 - **Group one:** Students use the toothpick to place the potato slice into their bag. The potato slice has not been touched, rubbed on a surface, or breathed on.
 - **Group two:** Students use the toothpick to hold the potato slice. Students take turns breathing on the potato slice and then seal it in the bag.
 - **Group three:** Students choose one classroom surface (such as the floor), rub the potato slice on it, and then seal the slice in the plastic bag.
 - **Group four:** Students pass around the potato slice and each touch it with their hands. Then they seal it in the plastic bag.
3. Place the bags in a dark area at room temperature. At the end of the week, have the students examine the slices and record their results in their science notebooks.