

Dear Families and Caregivers,

As the cold and flu season approaches, I want to share some very important information surrounding an increase in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and flu, Summit's sick policy for students, and a request to test for COVID. Thank you in advance for your review as we work as a school community to keep students, staff, and families healthy and safe.

Please note that the language in the alert contains recommendations from Erie County Department of Health and Kaleida Health that are not reflective of any policy changes for Summit Academy. For example, the recommendations in the alert advise mask-wearing but this is not a school requirement.

Alert from Erie County Department of Health and Kaleida Health

<https://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=press/erie-county-department-health-and-kaleida-health-alert-community-triple-threat-pediatric-respi>

The alert states the following:

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND KALEIDA HEALTH ALERT COMMUNITY TO TRIPLE THREAT OF PEDIATRIC RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

Surge in RSV and flu cases prompt warning and call to help prevent illness, protect vulnerable community members

ERIE COUNTY, NY – The Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) and Kaleida Health are alerting local residents of a surge in pediatric respiratory illnesses. This is based on significant, sustained patient volume at John R. Oishei Children's Hospital (OCH) Emergency Department and reported case data trends for RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) and influenza. This surge follows statewide and nationwide respiratory illness trends that are filling beds in pediatric hospitals, contributing to longer ED wait times, and increasing pressure on pediatricians' offices, urgent care centers and ambulance services.

"Our emergency department is seeing a steady stream of children with acute respiratory symptoms," said **Dr. Stephen Turkovich, Chief Medical Officer at John R. Oishei Children's Hospital**. "Over the last week, we've seen approximately 190 patients per day in our emergency department – many of whom are experiencing breathing problems due to RSV and the flu, with the youngest patients experiencing the most severe symptoms."

Since September 1, 2022, the number of patients admitted to OCH with RSV has exceeded 750, which is already double the number of patients admitted with RSV during the entire 2019-2020 respiratory season. Additionally, more than 1,500 children have tested positive for RSV in the OCH Emergency Department. An increasing number of patients tested positive for the flu over the last 10 days; nearly 40 children have been admitted to the hospital with the flu and over 350 have tested positive.

Parents and caregivers should consult with their child's primary care doctor or pediatrician as a first course of action for a sick child. Hospital emergency departments are best reserved for those with life-threatening or acute medical conditions that require immediate and advanced medical intervention.

"The widespread use of masks as an infection prevention tool reduced RSV and flu levels during the past two winter seasons," said **Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein**. "Without those preventive measures, these illnesses are back, and disproportionately affecting our community's youngest residents. These are common viruses, but they can be uncommonly severe for infants and young children. It's incumbent on each of us to take steps to maintain our own health and protect vulnerable people in our community."

ECDOH and OCH are echoing the messages shared by the [New York State Department of Health](#) on protecting against the “triple threat” of respiratory illnesses this winter season: RSV, flu and COVID-19.

- Stay up to date with flu vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines.
 - Stay home from school, work, daycare and other activities if you are sick.
 - Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth if you have symptoms of respiratory illness – coughing, stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat.
 - Masking indoors and social distancing may be important for those who live with higher risk individuals: infants, older adults, pregnant people, and people born pre-term or those with underlying health conditions.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and hot water for least 20 seconds to protect yourself from germs and avoid spreading them to others.
 - Do not cough or sneeze into your hands. Instead, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. Teach and remind children to do this, too.
 - Carry an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol to use when soap and water are not available.
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- Erie County Department of Health: www.erie.gov/health
 - John R. Oishei Children’s Hospital: www.ochbuffalo.org
 - Find a flu vaccine location: www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines
 - New York State, Public Awareness Campaign to Protect NY Against Respiratory Illness: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-launches-public-awareness-campaign-protect-new-yorkers-against-respiratory>
 - New York State Flu Tracker: <https://nyshc.health.ny.gov/web/nyapd/new-york-state-flu-tracker>
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Flu: www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season.htm
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, RSV: www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html

Sick Policy Reminders

Attached is a copy of the sick policy handout that is shared with families when their children are sent home with illness or suspected illness. In my last update letter, I shared the importance of keeping students home who are demonstrating symptoms of illness. Please remember that when a student is sent home ill, they need to be fever-free with no vomiting or diarrhea for a period of 24 hours before returning.

COVID Testing after the Thanksgiving Break

We are going to send home COVID tests to every family on Wednesday, November 23rd. Although it is not required, we request that you test your child/children on the evening of November 27th or the morning of November 28th before returning to school. We continue to receive reports of staff and students testing positive with very mild or no symptoms. This is another measure that will help us prevent COVID spread within our school.

Families and Caregivers, we appreciate your partnership in working to keep our schools healthy and safe. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Bennett

Mary Bennett, M.S.Ed., SBL, SDL
Principal, Summit Academy



Dear Parent / Guardian,

Your child was sent home today due to a health concern. Please use the following guidelines to determine when your child may return to school. Temporary exclusion from school is required to prevent the spread of infection to the other students and staff.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS:

THEN KEEP HOME UNTIL:

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| 1. Cold or Flu | 24 hours illness free |
| 2. Vomiting | 24 hours illness free, and is eating again |
| 3. Fever | 24 hours fever free, and not receiving any medication to reduce a fever (like Tylenol or Motrin) |
| 4. Diarrhea | No diarrhea for 24 hours |
| 5. Rash | Doctor's note may be required |
| 6. Broken Bones, Sprains, etc. | Doctor's note required detailing restrictions |
| 7. Hospitalization/Surgery, etc. | Doctor's note detailing restrictions |
| 8. Chickenpox scabbed | 6 days after rash breaks out, and when all lesions are |
| 9. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) | Can return 24 hours after the start of an antibiotic treatment |
| 10. Fifth Disease | Can return when child feels well enough |
| 11. Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (coxsackie virus) | Can return to school when the fever is gone and the blisters are healed |
| 12. Head Lice | Can return to school after treatment |
| 13. Skin Infection (Impetigo, Staph, MRSA, etc.) | Can return 24 hours after the start of an antibiotic treatment with infected area covered |
| 14. Pertussis | 5 days after the start of antibiotic treatment |
| 15. Pinworms | Can return after the treatment has started |
| 16. Ringworm | Can return after the treatment has started |
| 17. Roseola | Can attend when child feels well enough |
| 18. Scabies | Keep child home until treatment is completed |
| 19. Strep Throat or Scarlet Fever | Can return 24 hours after the start of an antibiotic treatment |

Student Name: _____ Classroom # _____ Date: _____

Reason sent home # _____ Time sent home _____ am /pm

Thank you for your cooperation,
School Nurses