



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2, 2017
REVISED 2/2/17, 7 pm

IMPORTANT HEALTH ALERT TO SMMUSD PARENTS AND STAFF IN SANTA MONICA

Dear parents / guardians and staff,

We learned that 7th grade students from John Adams Middle School (JAMS) were potentially exposed to a gastrointestinal illness during a five-day Yosemite science trip last week, possibly Norovirus. The 190 students, along with several teachers and parents, returned to Santa Monica on Friday, Jan. 27th and did not re-enter campus until Monday morning. We learned that several students showed signs of illness while still on the trip and we notified all JAMS parents on Sunday, as we worked to identify and determine the extent of the illness.

The health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority and we are working closely with Los Angeles Department of Public Health (LADPH) to institute control measures in order to help prevent the spread of this illness. LADPH is investigating and currently believes that this originated in Yosemite, potentially exposing students from dozens of school districts.

The challenge with this highly contagious illness is that a child or adult may still feel well when they are contagious, making containment difficult. We have experienced what we believe is the same illness appearing in other JAMS students who were not on the trip and we have learned, possibly spread to a few siblings attending other SMMUSD schools in Santa Monica.

We have ongoing cleaning with cleansers suggested by LADPH at JAMS, and any other classrooms and facilities where we learn of a case, and we will continue with this practice.

LADPH has provided the following information to share with our families:

Symptoms of gastrointestinal illnesses usually begin within an hour to 48 hours after exposure to agents such as bacteria, viruses or toxins. Symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever. If you are suffering from any of the above symptoms please notify the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health immediately.

People can become infected with gastrointestinal illnesses in some of the following ways, including:

- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the infectious agent and then placing their hands in their mouths
- Having direct contact with another person who is infected (for example, caring for someone who is ill or sharing utensils with someone who is ill)

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with the infectious agent.

These infections can be controlled by taking steps to prevent person-to-person transmission. The specific control measures that can be taken to decrease the spread of gastrointestinal illnesses include:

- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces contaminated with vomit and fecal material and the area surrounding these contaminated surfaces promptly
- Increasing the frequency of environmental cleaning in areas including bathrooms, kitchens, faucets, door handles, walls, and outside equipment
- Using disinfectants or bleach solutions on surfaces contaminated with vomit or feces.
- Cleaning agents used specifically for surfaces contaminated with Norovirus should be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Cleaning carpets and soft furnishings with hot water and detergent or steam (dry vacuuming is not recommended)
- Carefully and frequently washing your hands

Please, if your child exhibits any of these symptoms, please keep him or her home and alert your school. LADPH asks that any student with this illness be kept home for three days AFTER the end of ANY symptoms, including tiredness and weakness, as they are still contagious during this time period.

For questions regarding this notification alert please contact SMMUSD district nurse, Lora Morn at 310-450-8338 x.70218

Additional information is also available online at LADPH: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov> and gastrointestinal illnesses info: <http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/acd/Norovirus.htm>

We will continue to update you on this situation, as we focus on control measures to help prevent the spread of this illness on any of our campuses.

Thank you.

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