



# Superintendent's UPDATE

Thursday, November 10, 2022

## COVID-19 and School Health Update

Dear San Mateo County Education and Child Care Community,

Two topics have dominated the news this week – election results and RSV. In this note, I will focus on the latter, Respiratory Syncytial Virus, more commonly known as RSV. RSV is of particular interest to educators and child care providers as our youngest children are among the most impacted. In this week's update, I will unpack RSV a bit and share how we can protect ourselves and our youngest residents from this respiratory virus.

### **Some Context on RSV Case Numbers**

San Mateo County Health (SMCH) and the California Department of Health (CDPH) both report that case numbers of RSV (and the flu) are not higher than peak levels in other years. The difference is they are spiking earlier than usual. The numbers we're seeing now are more akin to case numbers typical for February. This means we need to jumpstart our efforts to protect ourselves, families, and those we serve. As I will share, much of what we have done to mitigate the spread of COVID applies here as well.

### **What Is RSV?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms, including a runny nose, decrease in appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, and wheezing. In young infants, the only symptoms may be irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties. Almost all children will have had RSV by their second birthday. There is no specific treatment for RSV, and most RSV infections go away on their own. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. You can read more about RSV on the [CDC's website](#).

### **Preventing RSV**

The good news is the COVID-19 prevention tools we have practiced also work well against RSV and the flu. Now is the time to revisit these practices and encourage our family members and school communities to do the same. The CDPH recently shared some mitigation strategies for RSV. Since they apply to COVID and the flu as well, these prevention measures deliver a lot of bang for the buck.

- Stay up to date on vaccinations – more on this below
- Optimize indoor air quality
- Use facemasks

- Maintain clean hands (don't forget those handwashing routines – they matter!), cover coughs and sneezes and wash hands afterwards
- Manage individuals with symptoms – encourage people to stay home when sick and avoid incentives that might encourage them to come to school
- Report concerns about cases to San Mateo County Health – they can advise on response and school information helps them understand the spread of the disease
- Have a plan for notifying staff and students who might be exposed
- Manage outbreaks – again, reach out to San Mateo County Health for support
- Clean facilities – nothing new is needed here; just be sure to continue established surface cleaning and disinfection routines

Yesterday, the CDPH also released a video with key tips for protecting ourselves and families from severe illness and hospitalization due to respiratory diseases like COVID, RSV, and the flu. Find the [short video here](#).

### **Vaccines Are Still the Best Protection**

While there is not a vaccine for RSV, there are effective vaccines for the flu and COVID. These vaccines continue to be our best defense against severe illness, and we can get both at the same time. According to CDPH, this year's flu vaccine is a good match for the flu virus most commonly surfacing so far this fall. SMCH lists upcoming vaccination clinics on its [website](#). If you are interested in hosting a vaccination clinic on your campus, please complete SMCH's [interest form](#). The CDPH also has a [webpage](#) dedicated to vaccination clinics, including information, options, and best practices.

### **Don't Forget COVID Testing**

If your district or school missed ordering test kits for the Thanksgiving break, reach out to [CDPH's testing program](#) to see if you can still participate in that disbursement of test kits. CDPH will provide the San Mateo County Office of Education with test kits for distribution to public and private schools before the winter break, and our staff will be in touch with districts and schools about the distribution of these test kits.

I wish you a meaningful and restorative Veteran's Day holiday that includes opportunities to thank or honor a veteran in your life. At SMCOE, we deeply appreciate all those who have served in our nation's armed forces.



Nancy Magee  
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

Please note: A copy of this letter in Spanish will be [posted here](#) shortly.