

Back to school can increase risk of getting flu germs

Banner Health also releases tighter flu restrictions in light of surge in flu cases

Contact: (602) 448-8459

“ This is shaping up to be a particularly long and difficult flu season ”

As students go back to school after being off for winter break, their chances of picking up a flu bug can also increase, say Banner Health Infection Prevention specialists.

Schools can provide the right kind of environment for germ swapping as kids come back from staying with families who may have already experienced the flu.

“This is shaping up to be a particularly long and difficult flu season,” said Marti Reich, Infection Prevention program director at Cardon Children’s Medical Center and Banner Desert Medical Center. “We want to help your family stay healthy.”

Here are some steps children can take to avoid the flu:

- **Wash your hands:** Hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent colds and flu. To help your child know how long to wash her hands, tell her to sing the 'Happy Birthday' song twice to get them really clean.
- **Avoid the T zone:** The T zone represents the the eyes, nose and mouth. Those areas are a place of entry for germs. Hands pick up those germs from surfaces (like a school classroom) and transfer them into the eyes, nose and mouth.
- **Use separate cups and utensils:** Kids often share drinks and food. But when someone has a cold or the flu that can spread viruses. Remember, people are often contagious before they start coughing or sniffing.
- **Cough into your arm:** Cough or sneeze into the inside of her elbow.
- **Get enough rest:** Kids need to get enough sleep: 10 to 11 hours a night for school-age children (ages 5 to 10) and more for younger kids. Sleep can help immune systems function better.
- **Get the flu shot:** It’s not too late; supplies are still available at Banner Urgent Care clinics and drugstores across the Valley.
- **Stay out of school if you are sick.**

Due to significant flu activity in our community, Banner Health recently has expanded visitor restrictions to protect our most vulnerable patients:

- **NICU/Nursery:** Only parents or a legal guardian to the baby may visit. Parents/legal guardians who have had signs and symptoms of flu or a diagnosis of flu in the past seven days may not visit the NICU/Nursery. Well parents/legal guardians are required to wash hands prior to visit and wear a mask during the NICU/Nursery visit.
- **Boswell Skilled Nursing Facility:** No visitation at this time.

These restrictions are in addition to previous flu-fighting restrictions that were put into place late last year:

- Do not visit the hospital if you have a fever, cough, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Please, no visitors under the age of 13.
- Siblings, who do not have cold and flu symptoms, may visit a new baby on the Obstetrics unit or Pediatric unit only. Your child may be screened for illness by staff before being allowed to visit.
- Children 12 and under must be supervised by an adult at all times in public waiting areas and cafeterias.
- Please wash or sanitize your hands frequently while at the hospital.

Media: We have a number of flu-related resources:

- [This is a challenging flu season -- ready-to-edit video](#)
- [Flu myths](#)
- [Why flu restrictions are put into place](#)

<http://bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/Back-to-school-can-increase-risk-of-getting-flu-germs>