

# Center Hill students, staff not immune to flu epidemic

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Like the rest of the state and much of the nation, sounds of coughs and sneezes are echoing through the halls of Center Hill High School as the flu epidemic takes its toll on students and teachers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports flu cases in all 50 states, and all but three states have widespread flu activity. According to the Mississippi State Department of Health, "During week 03 (01/13/19-01/19/19), the overall state ILI rate (4.2%) increased from the previous week (3.6%), but was lower than this time last year (9.4%)."

In District I, which includes DeSoto County, the rate for week 3 is 5.3%, which means about one of every 20 residents has some form of influenza.

Common symptoms of the flu include fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue. According to [cdc.gov](#), flu can be prevented by frequent hand washing as well as covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough.

There have been many student absences in the past few weeks, due to the flu. Senior Sophie Webb was among those who battled flu-like symptoms for three days.

"I really didn't want to miss school, because I didn't want to get behind in my classes," she said.

Even though Webb did not come to school sick, some students do and that's not OK, English teacher Victoria Moore said.

"When students come to school sick, they share the illness with others, which is how so many students become infected," Moore said. "I have a 3-month-old baby, and like other teachers with children, I don't want to take illness to him."

Health and school officials caution that the flu spreads very quickly, and the symptoms do not always show up right away. When symptoms appear, there are many ways to get better, including rest, medicine and plenty of fluids.

"I mainly just slept and stayed warm to get better," Webb said. "I went to the doctor and they gave me some flu medicine, but I just slept mostly and drank a lot of water."

Flu symptoms can appear suddenly, and the virus spreads very quickly, especially in a place like a school, where hundreds of people share the same spaces.

"Many students feel fine in the morning and then they're out sick with a fever that night, and by then they have already infected someone else," attendance clerk Cathy Dawson said.

Students typically miss around five days when they have the flu, so their doctor's note is not turned in until the sixth day. Dawson recommends faxing a doctor's note to the school so the absences can be excused before truancy letters are mailed after five unexcused absences.

Students who receive a truancy letter after being out with the flu or another illness should contact Dawson and turn in the doctor's note as soon as possible so that the problem can be resolved.

From a teacher's perspective, Moore said extended absences from the flu hurts the classroom dynamic.

"It is detrimental in an English class setting because having students out limits the amount of unique perspectives during class discussion and analysis," she said, adding that so far this school year she has had more than five students out with the flu. "My class thrives when there are multiple approaches to a work of literature. Fewer students can mean less lively discussions."