**April 27, 2022**

From the office of the school nurse

While we are moving toward a more “normal” life post-COVID, we aren’t ACTUALLY post-COVID. We are moving away from “pandemic” to learning to live with COVID in our lives. Learning to live with COVID involves behaviors that support health- ours and others.

Supporting health looks like: eating healthy, exercising, and getting adequate sleep. But it also looks like making decisions about when to stay home and when to go to work/school. Fewer people are choosing to test for COVID unless they feel ill enough that antiviral medications would help. That leaves a lot of uncertainty when people are out ill. For two years, a positive test for COVID allowed people to remain home with less anxiety about missing school and/or work. Businesses and schools are becoming less supportive of missing due to illness. Just like with influenza, we will go through peaks of cases, and then periods of no cases.

If your child is ill, there are home tests available through your insurance, through public health, and online. If your child tests positive for COVID and is feeling too poorly to attend school, they are still excused absences. The recommendation remains to stay home 5 days, and if feeling better, return and wear a mask for the next few days. The school wants to support our students to the best of our ability, by trying to keep your child healthy at school, providing nutritious meals, and offering opportunities for exercise. We need families to help by keeping children home when they are ill. We have previously sent out information about when a child must stay home and for how long depending on illness. If your child becomes ill, please consider testing them for COVID, as we are seeing an increase in positive cases.

Trust me when I say, I am looking forward to a day where testing for COVID only needs to happen when you feel seriously ill- such as it is with influenza. We aren’t there quite yet, so you may get calls from the school that your child has multiple symptoms that could be COVID and would like to test them. We will continue to offer testing through the school as long as we have it available. Students will be excused for the 5 days, longer if they are feeling ill enough to need extra time. Masks will be expected after a positive test for improved prevention of spread. Until COVID happened, students and families would do what they needed to keep an illness from spreading. COVID changed that a bit simply because of the LONG isolation expectations. Those are no longer the expectations, but I think we can all agree that we want our children healthy and happy so if we can help we will. Help is in the form of good handwashing, distancing when not feeling well, and staying home if feeling very poorly. If not feeling well, but not ill enough to stay home- please consider masking until symptoms improve. We know that masks prevented the spread of strep, stomach flu, and influenza, and slowed the spread of COVID in schools. So, please encourage your child to wear a mask when having symptoms of any illness until they feel better.

Any questions, concerns, or need access to home testing kits, please call me at 218-280-3125 or email me at tracyj@ada.k12.mn.us or tracyj@nce.k12.mn.us

Sincerely,

Nurse Tracy