



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

AND

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT ON UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS IN
SCHOOLS**

17th March 2022

Of note, younger learners appear to have a higher attack rate as compared to older learners. And in most cases, the illness was between mild and moderate with no signs of severe respiratory illness. It was further noted that the illness run a self-limiting course.

This confirmed an outbreak of Influenza A in this setting which we think is obtaining across the country. The co-circulation of Influenza A and B is not a unique finding in congregate settings. The Ministries of Health and Education have continued to work together to investigate and respond to other clusters of upper respiratory tract infections in schools to ensure there is no potential missed diagnosis of COVID-19 in these schools.

Available evidence in Uganda, over the years we know Influenza type A follows a cyclic pattern with an annual bimodal distribution. Whereas the cases and the clusters are still appearing, available data from the Ministry of Health District Health Information System, it appears the peak of these clusters has not been superseded.

The findings and the response in this school cluster is consistent and arise from the joint planning and preparations between the two Ministries to prevent surgency of COVID-19 in schools. The Ministries of Health and Education & Sports, set up the School Based Surveillance system that was initiated on full reopening of schools.

Following the safe re-opening of schools, the Ministry of Health with support from Partners continued to work with the Ministry of Education and Sports on School Based Surveillance in schools and other higher institutions of learning. Some of the activities implemented include:

- Joint weekly meetings to discuss key issues of concern including status of registration and reporting by schools
- Mainstreaming monitoring with emphasis on adherence to Standard Operating Procedures
- Launched School Based Surveillance System with participation of the district leaders and embarked on the roll out and monitoring
- Additionally, school based clinical care protocol for schools to care for suspected/confirmed cases among learners.
- Developed a real time dashboard for data visualisation
- Continued vaccination of teachers and students above 18 years.

We would like to appeal to schools' authorities to;

- Strongly implement adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) such as use of **face masks** at all times, and **hand hygiene** in classes, dormitories, and all services points in the school's environment.
- Improved and early reporting and follow up of cases and clusters by schools

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- Avoiding overcrowding in schools by bringing people who are not within school community as seen in Parent's meeting in some schools
- We encourage the administrator to make use of the sick bay other than sending students in the boarding section home. Instead refer sick children to hospital for further management. While day scholars with moderate symptoms should be treated while at home and once better then report to school
- Utilize the double swift system to reduce congestions in schools
- Students should maintain respiratory etiquette by covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Ensure students are Kept hydrated by taking plenty of water or juice

In conclusion, we would like to reassure the public to remain calm and vigilant in the wake of this outbreak of Influenza A as the country remains on high alert to avert any potential resurgence of COVID-19.

We do not recommend closure of any learning institution to prevent flu transmission. However, in extreme circumstances schools can only be closed with the approval of Ministry of Health in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Sports.

I thank you.

For God and my Country

