

Kent County School Absenteeism Trends

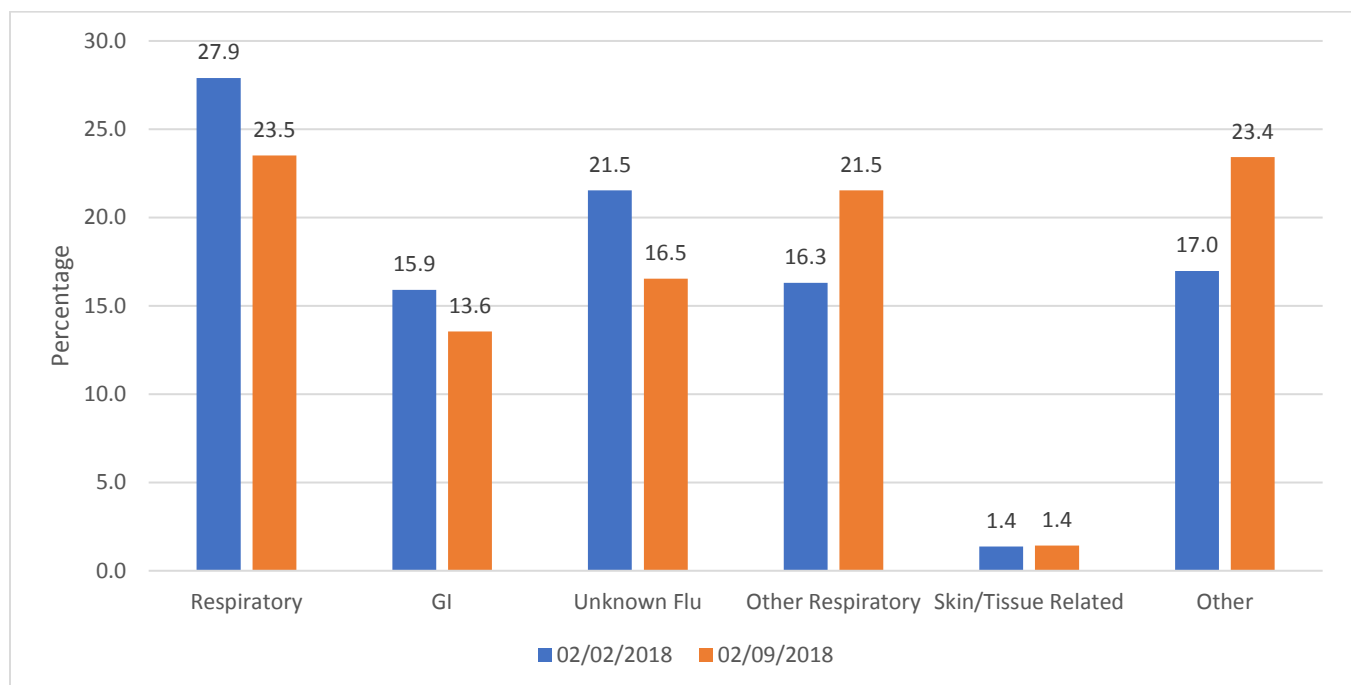
Week 02/05/2018 to 02/09/2018

Schools are an important part of the public health system and information submitted by schools to the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) regarding student absences is critical to identifying disease trends that are occurring within the county. Schools submit a weekly report containing the number of student absences due to the following communicable diseases: “Flu-like” illnesses (respiratory, stomach, and unknown), respiratory infections (common cold, mononucleosis, strep throat, asthma, and bronchitis), and Skin/Tissue-related illnesses (head lice, pink eye, impetigo, Scarlet fever, scabies, and fifth disease). In addition to the above diseases, KCHD collects data related to absences due to illness that are diagnosed by a physician, such as Chickenpox, Measles, Rubella, Mumps, Hepatitis, Pertussis, *Haemophilus influenzae* type B, Encephalitis and Meningitis

For the week ending February 9, 2018, there were 166 reports received, accounting for 55,646 students enrolled in Kent County schools. Many schools were closed due to snow on Friday, February 9 and this likely impacted the number of reports received this week. Please note that the low number of reports may affect the reliability of this week’s data.

Throughout the week, there were 4,854 students absent from school, representing 8.7% of the total reported enrollment, which was lower than the previous week (9.2%). As seen in **Figure 1**, reports of other respiratory illness and “other” illnesses were higher than the previous week (02/02/2018). Respiratory flu accounted for the greatest percentage of absences (23.5%) during the week.

Figure 1. School Illness by Category, Week Ending 02/02/2018 and 02/09/2018, Kent County



In terms of total numbers, the most commonly reported illness was respiratory flu (n=1141) and “other” illnesses were a close second (n=1137) (**Figure 2**).

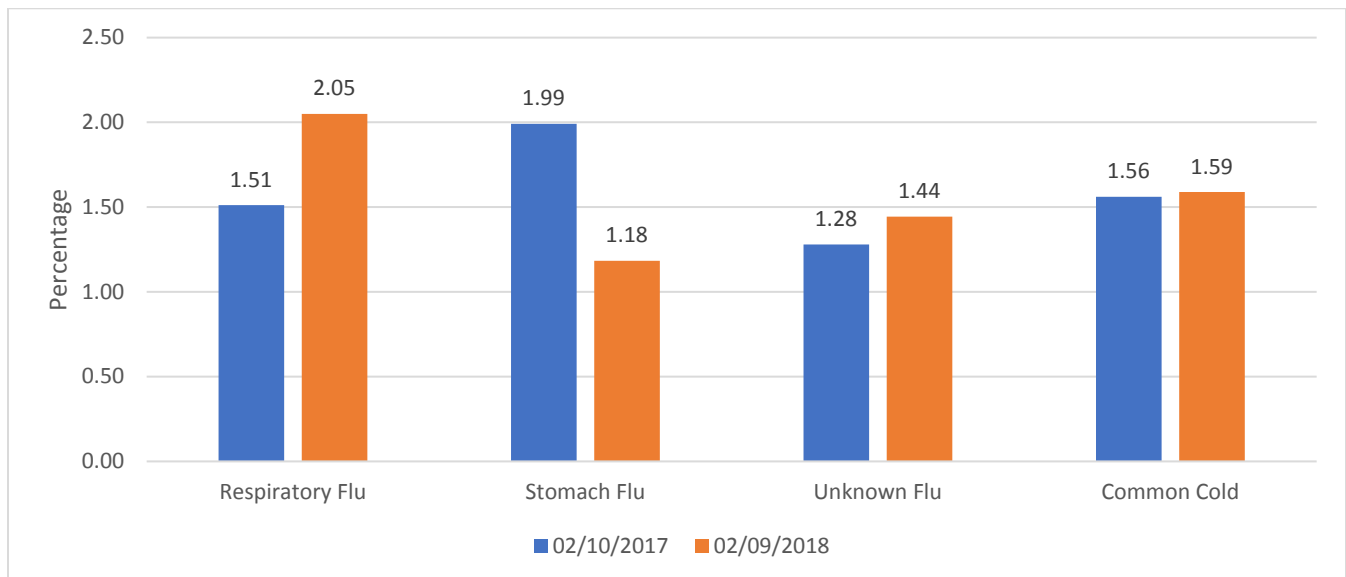
Figure 2. Absences due to reportable illnesses, Week Ending 02/09/2018, Kent County.

Reportable Illness	Number of Cases
Respiratory Flu	1141
Other*	1137
Cold	884
Unknown Flu	803
Stomach Flu	658
Strep	122
Head Lice	34
Asthma	31
Pink Eye	27
Bronchitis	8
Scarlet Fever	5
Fifth Disease	2
Mono	1
Scabies	1
Impetigo	0

*Illnesses that were not diagnosed, or required more information, were listed under the “Other” category.

In comparison with this time last year, percentages (based on total weekly enrollment) for respiratory flu, unknown flu and the common cold were higher than those reported during the week ending February 10, 2017. (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Comparison of the most common illnesses reported among school absences (week ending 02/10/2017 and 02/09/2018).



Percentages based on total weekly enrollment.