



Hamilton

October 23, 2009

City of Hamilton
Public Health Services
Health Protection Division
1 Hughson Street North, 4th Floor,
Hamilton, Ontario L8R 3L5

To all Students, Parents and Staff of Hamilton Schools,

As you are likely aware, a number of schools in Hamilton are experiencing outbreaks of respiratory illness. A number of these outbreaks have been confirmed to be Influenza A pandemic H1N1. We are also seeing an increasing number of Influenza A pandemic H1N1 cases within our community. In fact, we are experiencing widespread Influenza A pandemic H1N1 activity right now in Hamilton.

Influenza A pandemic H1N1 is a new version of the flu virus. It is spread from person to person, and causes the same symptoms as regular flu. Pandemic H1N1 spreads like any other flu virus, mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. People can become infected by touching objects or surfaces with the flu viruses on them and then touching their mouth or nose.

Influenza A pandemic H1N1, like most respiratory viruses, can spread quite easily within the school environment. In order to protect yourself, your child and others, the advice from Hamilton Public Health Services to parents, students and staff at this time is:

- **Stay home when ill:** Staff or students should not go to school if they develop signs and symptoms of illness such as fever, cough, sore throat, headache, lack of appetite, fatigue, vomiting or diarrhea. If a staff or student becomes ill while at school, they should go home and not return until 24 hours after feeling better. If your child becomes ill while at school, the school will be sending them home. If you are contacted to pick-up your ill child from school it is important that you do so as quickly as possible.
- **Inform school of symptoms:** If staff or a student is away from school, please inform the school as to the reason for the absence; provide information about symptoms such as fever or cough. This will help us better understand the extent of the illness transmission in the school population.
- **Get an Influenza vaccine:** Pandemic H1N1 vaccine will be made available at public clinics in the coming weeks. The vaccine will protect you and your children from Pandemic H1N1 Influenza this season.
- **Wash your hands:** Wash hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If hand-washing facilities are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Practice good hygiene:** Cough and sneeze into your sleeve instead of into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Keep the environment clean:** Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces will assist in preventing spread of illness.
- **Do not share items:** Students and staff should not to share food, beverages and other personal items such as utensils, lip products or toothbrushes.
- **Contact your health care provider, if necessary:** If the symptoms worsen, seek medical attention. Adults and children with underlying medical conditions, adults over the age of 65 and children under the age of 2 years, as well as pregnant women who develop fever and cough should seek medical attention.

A fact sheet has been included which provides further information about Pandemic H1N1 Influenza.

Should you have any questions please call (905) 546-H1N1 (4161).

Sincerely,

Michelle Baird
Manager, Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Program
Hamilton Public Health Services