

October 16, 2009

Dear parents, staff, students and volunteers:

As you know, the first week of school we provided a letter about our plan to deal with pH1N1. With the new school year underway, I want to update you on the great work our schools have done. We also want to provide information about what you can continue to do to protect yourself and your family.

This fall and winter, there may be two types of flu viruses circulating – the seasonal flu and H1N1. In Ontario, the majority of cases of this new flu strain have been in healthy young adults and most cases have been mild. Younger children are at risk of infection, possibly because they don't wash their hands consistently or use proper etiquette when sneezing/coughing.

Symptoms of H1N1 are similar to seasonal flu, including headache, chills and cough followed by fever, loss of appetite, muscle aches and fatigue, runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and throat irritation. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may occur in adults as well as in children. In more severe cases, or in people with chronic conditions, complications such as pneumonia may develop.

The Peel District School Board has a comprehensive plan for dealing with pH1N1. That plan, and any updates, are available at www.peelschools.org. Based on the advice of Peel Public Health, we are taking steps to prevent the spread of H1N1 in our schools. Some of these steps include:

- Make staff, students and parents aware of the symptoms of pH1N1, and encouraging them to stay home if ill;
- Continue to consult with Peel Public Health on infection prevention measures;
- Ensure soap and water is available for hand washing, as well as placing alcohol-based hand sanitizer (used under adult supervision) in areas where hand washing is not available; and,
- Clean commonly touched surfaces/items frequently.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care advises everyone to take an active role in protecting themselves from H1N1. Here are a few things you can do:

- **Teach children to wash their hands with soap and water** thoroughly and often.
- **Keep alcohol-based sanitizer (gel or wipes) handy** at work and in your car. Note that alcohol-based sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective.
- **Teach children not to share personal items** like pens, pencils, drinks, or food.
- **Teach children to cough or sneeze into their sleeve or a tissue, not their hand.** This includes teaching them to dispose of tissues in the garbage immediately.
- **Keep sick children at home** until they are feeling well and are able to fully participate in all normal day-to-day activities.

For more information on H1N1, see the attached tip sheet, contact Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 or visit www.peelregion.ca and or visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website at www.ontario.ca/flu.

We will continue to keep you updated as we work together to prevent the spread of pH1N1.

Yours truly,



Jim Grieve
Director of Education

FLU & YOU:

What you need to know



Good hand hygiene is the best way to fight the flu. Teach your children to wash their hands thoroughly and often for at least 15 seconds with soap and water.



Keep commonly touched surfaces and items clean and disinfected.



If you can't wash your hands keep an alcohol-based hand sanitizer handy such as in your car.



Teach children to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their sleeve, not their hand. Dispose of tissues immediately.



If your children are sick keep them at home.



Make sure you provide your up to date emergency contact information to the school in case your child becomes ill while at school.

For more information about seasonal flu, H1N1 and pandemic preparedness visit: ontario.ca/flu
Or call **ServiceOntario INFOLine** at:
1-800-476-9708
TTY: 1-800-387-5559

If you have symptoms, call **Telehealth Ontario** at:
1-866-797-0000
TTY: 1-866-797-0007
Or contact your health care provider.