

Advice for Parents in preparing for a possible H1N1 outbreak

What is the H1N1 Flu Virus (human swine influenza)?

This virus, which was previously called “swine flu”, is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal flu.

The main symptoms are a sudden cough and/or shortness of breath, often with a fever over 38C or 100.4F.

Other symptoms may include headache, tiredness, sore throat, loss of appetite, chills, muscle aches, runny nose, and sneezing. Some people with this virus have also reported vomiting and diarrhea.

Is this virus contagious? How does it spread between people?

The virus is believed to spread in the same manner as seasonal influenza: person to person mainly by “droplet spread.” This happens when the droplets from a cough or sneeze are released into the air and then breathed in by others who are less than six feet away. The virus can also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or object and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. The virus can live outside the body on hard surfaces for short periods. However, it should be noted that the virus is easily killed by hand-washing with warm water and soap or hand sanitizer. Household disinfectants will kill the virus on household items and surfaces.

What is the difference between seasonal flu and H1N1?

The symptoms are similar but because it is a new flu virus, no-one will have immunity to H1N1 and everyone could be at risk of catching it. In particular, it affects children and young adults more readily than seasonal flu.

Who is most at risk of complications?

Asthmatics, pregnant women, children under 1, and anyone with a chronic condition that affects their immune or respiratory system.

What can you do to protect your family?

Ensure that everyone eats a healthy diet, sleeps well, enjoys fresh air and exercise, and stays away from people who are unwell.

Teach your family good hand-washing habits. Wash for at least 20seconds, with plenty soap or hand sanitizer if soap is not available. Wash all surfaces of the hands, rinse and dry well.

Teach good respiratory etiquette. Keep hands away from mouth and nose. If you cough or sneeze, use a tissue, put it in the bin immediately, and wash your hands straight away. **Catch it, bin it, kill it!**

The School has on order extra tissues and hand sanitizer for classroom use. However, you may wish your child to carry a personal supply of such items. Younger children should give any such supplies to their teachers.

If you are aware that anyone in your family is at risk of complications, you should discuss what to do with your own GP.

If your child is unwell, he/she should stay at home. Call or e-mail the Department Secretary and share the symptoms of the illness. The School is obligated to report all such occurrences.

In the event that you are called by the School, have a plan in place now for who will pick up and look after your child. Ensure that the school always has your current contact information.

If your child is unwell and you are called by the School, please pick up within the hour.

Consider flu and H1N1 immunizations when available.

Good information is available from www.gov.bm and www.cdc.com

What is the school doing to help reduce or limit the spread of any flu virus?

We will educate all children on hand-washing and respiratory etiquette.

We will provide Purell, or other such hand sanitizer, and tissues in all classes.

We will send sick children and staff home to minimize contact with others. Anyone who may be infectious will be safely isolated until pick up.

We will be vigilant regarding extra cleaning of surfaces and common areas.

We will publicly display hand-washing and "Cover your Cough" posters.

We will educate our staff regarding symptoms and procedures to be followed.

We will ensure that there is adequate provision in our hand-washing facilities and encourage their use

We will keep parents abreast of any new developments, as well as any changes in our procedures.

We will stay in contact with Public Health Authorities and adjust our response as necessary.

We will encourage our staff to have seasonal flu and H1N1 immunizations when available.

Wherever possible, we will assist with the setting of work depending upon the length of absence and the medical condition of the child.

Will the school close if someone has H1N1?

No, our goal is to keep the school open. However, we will monitor the situation and make decisions accordingly. In the event that so many staff and students are absent and that we are unable to deliver our curriculum adequately, any decision regarding closure will be made by the Headmaster and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Ministry of Health.

Will the School continue to take school trips and run extracurricular activities?

At this moment, all school trips and extracurricular activities will proceed as planned, as the current situation related to H1N1 suggests there is no reason not to travel or to carry on regular activities. We will continue to monitor the evolution of the H1N1 virus and should the need arise a decision would be made at that time.

Can the viruses live on surfaces like books and keyboards?

Yes, for up to 2 hours. Naturally, we cannot clean every book and every keyboard as frequently as would be required. Each child, therefore, will wash his/her hands prior to using libraries and computer labs. Additional supplies of hand sanitizer will be located in such facilities.

How long do I keep my child at home with the flu?

Until your child has had no fever for more than 24 hours, without the help of medicine such as Tylenol, and feels well enough to return to school.

Are there medications available to prevent this flu?

Antiviral medications are not recommended for persons not showing symptoms, to prevent the spread of this virus. Antiviral medications MAY be recommended by a health care provider for the treatment of certain persons with a confirmed diagnosis of this virus. Persons who might be given medication would include pregnant women, the elderly and those with immunosuppressive conditions.

What should I do if my child has the flu?

Give plenty fluids, allow lots of rest and give Tylenol or Advil for fever and aches and pains. Do not give aspirin to children under 16. Call your GP for advice if this does not help.

When do I need to seek emergency care?

In the event of: any fast breathing, a blue or grey skin colour, not drinking enough fluid, not urinating or producing tears, not waking or interacting, not wanting to be held and irritable, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe vomiting, or if flu like symptoms improve but then worsen with the return of a fever and a more severe cough.

Where can I get information?

Lindsay Manderson, School Nurse, 292 6177 x 6240 or lmanderson@saltus.bm

www.cdc.com

www.gov.bm

THIS INFORMATION DOES NOT REPLACE THE ADVICE OF YOUR GP. CALL HIS/HER OFFICE IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER.