

(for school principals to notify parents/staff when the school is reporting >10% absenteeism due to ILI at the school – Revised Oct. 28, 2009)

Dear Parent or Guardian or Staff Member,

The school your child attends or you work at has recently experienced an increase in numbers of students/ staff ill with influenza-like illness. Influenza-like illness (ILI) is defined as: the sudden onset of respiratory symptoms with new cough and fever (not always present) with one or more of: sore throat; muscle aches; joint pain; weakness. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea may also be present.

Alberta Health Services (AHS), Public Health believes this increased illness is likely due to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza because this virus is the cause of most of the ILI that is being seen in school populations currently.

As recommended by Public Health, the school is:

- Promoting and reminding students and staff of basic infection control practices such as respiratory hygiene, and frequent hand cleaning.
- Notifying parents if students become ill with ILI at school. Ill students will be kept separated from others until picked up by parents/ guardians.
- Advising ill students/ staff to stay home.
- Carrying out frequent environmental cleaning including high touch surfaces.
- Monitoring student and staff absentee rates due to illness.

Parents are asked to keep ill children at home until they are free of symptoms and feeling well, and are able to fully participate in all normal daily school activities; this applies to staff as well. Encourage and remind your children to use respiratory hygiene (i.e. cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough and sneeze into their sleeve, dispose of used tissues and wash hands afterwards using soap and water, use alcohol-based hand rub if there is no access to soap and water).

Healthy children/staff with mild infections do NOT need to be tested. Individuals should have medical attention as soon as possible for early treatment **ONLY IF** they have any of the following:

- Chronic heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Immune suppression
- Neuromuscular disorders
- Blood disorders
- Conditions requiring long term treatment with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- Conditions that can compromise the management of respiratory function or increase the risk of aspiration
- Pregnancy

Immunization is the best protection against Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza.

For more information on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, refer to the following websites:

<http://education.alberta.ca/>

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/>

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>