

October 14, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We are now well into the new school year and I want to take the opportunity to update you on the strategies and actions our schools have taken with respect to H1N1. 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 Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board continues to work closely with our regional health authorities (Peel Health and the Wellington Dufferin Guelph Health Unit), as well as the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and based on the advice of these authorities, we are taking steps to prevent the spread of H1N1 in our schools. Some of these steps include:

- ▶ Making staff, students and parents aware of the symptoms of H1N1, and encouraging them to stay home when ill,
- ▶ Continue to consult with the above authorities on infection prevention and control;
- ▶ Ensuring 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,
- ▶ Frequently cleaning commonly touched surfaces/items.

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 Q & A on the reverse of this letter, contact Peel Public Health 905-799-7700 or www.peelregion.ca, Wellington Dufferin Guelph Health Unit at 1-800-265-7293 or www.wdghu.org, 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 H1N1.

Sincerely,



John B. Kostoff
Director of Education

