



Public Health

ADVISORY

SUBJECT: H1N1 Update
Date issued: October 28, 2009 **Pages: 2**
To: Schools
From: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health (A) and CEO

H1N1 is in our community. It is occurring more frequently in people 0 to 18 years of age. Although most people recover at home, some children and adults get very ill and require hospitalization and intensive care.

Children 6 months to 4 years have been identified as priority groups to receive the H1N1 influenza vaccine. We are also strongly encouraging children ages 5 to 18 be vaccinated.

No children have died from getting the vaccine. But children who were not vaccinated have died from H1N1 flu.

The most common reactions to the H1N1 flu shot include:

- A sore arm with swelling is very common but goes away in a day or two
- Fatigue
- Muscle and joint pain
- Headache
- Rarely some younger children have a fever, drowsiness, irritability, and loss of appetite

I strongly encourage you to protect your child from H1N1 by having them vaccinated as soon as possible. For clinic schedules and for more information about the H1N1 vaccine, please go to our website at www.wdghu.org or call 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4161.

We appreciate the actions parents, students, and school staff have taken to prevent the spread of illness. Please continue to take steps to protect yourself and your family.

Why is Public Health not notifying schools about confirmed cases of H1N1?

Labs no longer confirm most cases

Only people who are hospitalized for severe symptoms have their results confirmed by laboratory tests. Ontario's Public Health laboratories stopped regular testing for H1N1 in June.

The reasons for no longer testing for H1N1 are:

- The virus is known to be firmly established in the community and schools.
- Lab tests are done only for very ill people or people who are at risk of severe complications.
- Most people who have flu-like symptoms have H1N1.
- Most people with H1N1 flu can take care of themselves at home and do not need to see their doctor or get a lab test to confirm H1N1.

A person's health is private

A person's medical condition is private and confidential information that cannot be shared with the public.

Assume H1N1 is in your school

Whether or not there are confirmed cases of H1N1 at school, it's important that you assume H1N1 flu is in all schools and take steps to protect your family from becoming ill.

School staff should continue with effective infection control practices to stop the spread of disease. Schools are required to report total absenteeism rates, and rates that are higher than normal, to Public Health. This allows Public Health and schools to work together to monitor the rates and make decisions regarding infection control.

For more information, refer to contact or website:

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Contact: 519.846.2715 or 1.800.265.7293 ext. 4161 / www.wdghu.org