

October 28, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you are no doubt aware, there have been confirmed cases of Pandemic H1N1 Influenza virus in the KFL&A area, and Dr Gemmill, Chief Medical Officer for KFLA has advised school boards that parents and staff should make the assumption that H1N1 is present in our schools, regardless of whether testing has occurred in any specific school or classroom.

The Limestone District School Board is committed to the safety of students and staff, and to prompt and timely communication with parents about the status of the flu in our schools. At Acadie we will continue to let parents know by a letter *posted on school website* when our overall school absenteeism rate related to influenza-like-illness exceeds 10% and we will continue to report daily to KFL&A Public Health a greater than 10% absence rate due to influenza-like illness. For the next few weeks we will also issue a weekly update letter to parents/guardians via the *school website* regardless of our level of absence. However, since confirmation of H1N1 through lab tests is being done by random sampling, it will be impossible for us to confirm with confidence the presence or absence of H1N1 in a specific class or school. **Therefore, at this point in time, please assume that there are cases in our school and in your child's classroom, as well as in the larger community.**

H1N1 Influenza feels very much like the regular seasonal flu. Symptoms include fever, new or worsening cough, sore throat, joint and muscle pain, headache, chills and fatigue.

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

- ? **Teach your 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 hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective.
- ? **Teach your children not to share personal items** like pens, pencils, drinks, or food.
- ? **Teach your 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, and to follow-up by washing their hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ? **Keep sick children at home until they are fever free for 24 hours (un-medicated) and are feeling well and able to fully participate in all normal day-to-day activities.** You do not need a medical note for them to return to school.
- ? **If you have concerns about your child's health contact your health care provider.**

For more information you may visit:

- the EDACA@limestone.on.ca
- Limestone District School Board <http://www.limestone.on.ca/>
- KFL&A Public Health www.kflapublichealth.ca or call Public Health Influenza Info line 613-549-5923
- the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at www.ontario.ca/flu.

For your convenience, the following information has been printed from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website, in case you do not have access to the web.

We will continue to provide you with weekly updates on the situation. Everyone's combined efforts will help us to reach the common goal of keeping students and staff well and attending school.

Sincerely,

(Principal)

H1N1 Flu Virus

What to do if you have symptoms

Symptoms

H1N1 flu feels very much like the regular seasonal flu. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

When you should seek medical care

Most cases of H1N1 flu tend to be mild. However, if you do not start to feel better after a few days or if your symptoms get worse, you should either call your health care provider or **Telehealth** at 1-866-797-0000.

Assessment Centres

Assessment Centres are currently set up at Hotel Dieu Hospital and at several Family Health Team offices throughout the community. Please see our Web site www.kflapublichealth.ca for the locations and dates that each assessment centre will open. The majority of people with influenza can be managed at home with rest and fever/pain medication. For those residents who need to seek medical care, they can be assessed at these centres rather than go to the Emergency Departments.

You should call your health care provider immediately if you experience flu symptoms and you :

- are pregnant;
- have heart or lung disease;
- have any other chronic health problem that requires regular medical attention;
- live in a remote or isolated community;
- are elderly or frail; or
- have an illness or are receiving treatments – for example, for diabetes, cancer, or HIV/AIDS – that might affect your immune system.

What to do if your children are sick with flu

If your child is suffering from the flu, you should seek medical care immediately if his or her symptoms improve and then suddenly become worse. In addition, seek care if you notice any of the following signs :

- fast or difficult breathing;
- bluish or dark-coloured lips or skin;
- drowsiness to the point where he or she cannot be easily wakened;
- severe crankiness or not wanting to be held; or
- dehydration – not drinking enough fluids and not going to the bathroom regularly.

How to care for yourself

If you do get the flu, there are some things you can do to make yourself feel better and avoid spreading the virus to others. Stay home and get plenty of rest. Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, particularly after coughing or blowing your nose. To ease the symptoms of flu :

- drink lots of fluids;
- avoid drinks with caffeine;
- take basic pain or fever relievers;
- do not give acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) to children or teenagers under the age of 16;
- apply heat for short periods of time using a hot water bottle or heating pad to reduce muscle pain;
- take a warm bath;
- gargle with a glass of warm water or suck on hard candy or lozenges;
- use saline drops or spray for a stuffy nose; and
- avoid alcohol and tobacco.

Resources

- [Handwashing Techniques](#) [PDF]
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs \(OMAFRA\)](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) - USA
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)