

Dear Parent/Guardian:

With the new school year underway, I'd like to tell you about the actions we are taking to prepare for H1N1 – the new strain of flu that has received so much attention recently. This letter also includes information about what you can do to protect yourself and your family.

This fall and winter, there will 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.

We are taking steps to prevent the spread of H1N1 in our school and will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available. Some of these steps include:

- Watching students for symptoms of H1N1
- Consulting with the local public health unit 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 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 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 feeling well and are able to fully participate in all normal day-to-day activities.

For more information on H1N1, contact your local public health unit or visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website at www.ontario.ca/flu.

If you have any questions on what our school is doing, please let me know.

Sincerely,
[Principal]