

October 28, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:

A number of schools within Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) have reported an increased number of staff and student absences due to influenza-like illness (ILI). Some of these illnesses have been confirmed to be the H1N1 influenza virus, which according to Alberta Health Services (AHS) is presently the predominant flu virus circulating in schools and the community. There is no requirement for people who come in close contact with cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus to stay home from school or work if they remain free of symptoms.

EIPS continues to work closely with AHS to monitor ILI in our schools and provide information to our families and communities. We have established flu surveillance protocols and enhanced control measures across the division to limit the transmission of the illness.

As recommended by Alberta Health Services, our schools continue to:

- Promote basic infection control practices, including respiratory hygiene (proper cough/sneeze etiquette) and frequent hand washing.
- Notify parents if students become ill with ILI at school. These students will be isolated from other students until picked up by a parent/guardian.
- Conduct frequent environmental cleaning, with a focus on high-touch surfaces.
- Monitor student and staff absentee rates due to illness and report to Alberta Health Services rates of 10 per cent or greater.

Influenza-like illness is defined as the sudden onset of respiratory symptoms with a new cough and fever (not always present) with one or more of the following: sore throat, muscle aches, joint pain, or weakness. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea may also be present. We remind parents to please keep your ill children at home until they are symptom free, feeling well, and able to participate in all normal daily school activities. The same also applies to school and department staff as well as parents who volunteer their time in EIPS' schools.

Alberta Health Services is not recommending H1N1 testing of healthy students and staff with mild influenza-like symptoms. Individuals with these symptoms should seek medical attention as soon as possible for early treatment **only if** they have any of the following:

- Diabetes
- Immune suppression
- Blood disorders

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- Pregnancy
- Chronic heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease
- Neuromuscular 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

We encourage you to remind your students and children to use proper cough/sneeze etiquette and frequently wash their hands. Information to help you and your family with pandemic preparedness is available on our website at [www.eips.ca](http://www.eips.ca) under *Parents / H1N1 Preparedness*. Staff and administrator resources are available on the H1N1 section of the Intralink under *Education Executive / Communications Services / Service to Schools*. We also encourage you to visit the Alberta Health Services website at [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca) for additional information including the times and locations of H1N1 immunization clinics.

The health and safety of staff and students continues to be our top priority. Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your school principal. EIPS will continue to keep you updated on new information as it becomes available.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Egbert Stang  
Superintendent