

**Thursday, October 1, 2009**

Dear Parent,

We've only just begun our new school year, but we know that the cooler weather is on its way and with that the beginning of a new flu season. We know that because of H1N1, this year's flu season may be a bit different. The H1N1 virus continued to spread during the summer months, but there has been no fundamental change to the situation in our area. Cases of H1N1 in Ontario continue to be mild and it is important to recognize that there has not been a change in the severity of the illness.

It is always a priority to protect the health of students in our school and to minimize the spread of illness. Our Board works closely with the Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit and the provincial Ministry of Health to help prevent and manage flu-like illness, including H1N1. We act according to guidelines and recommendations provided to us from both of these organizations.

#### **About H1N1**

The H1N1 flu virus spreads from person to person in the same way as seasonal influenza - mainly through coughing or sneezing. Symptoms of H1N1 flu virus are similar to seasonal flu and they include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, joint pain or weakness. Young children may also have vomiting and/or diarrhea.

#### **Here's What We Are Doing:**

Our school is taking steps to control the spread of flu-like illness and to protect the health of your child by:

- encouraging frequent and correct hand hygiene - particularly after sneezing or coughing, before and after eating, after recreational activity and after going to the washroom
- encouraging the children to cough and sneeze into their sleeve (not their hands) or use a tissue to cover their mouth and nose
- thoroughly cleaning the commonly-touched surfaces throughout our schools on a routine basis
- notifying parents immediately if their child arrives at school ill or becomes ill promptly isolating children who are ill in a separate, supervised area away from others until they are picked up by the parent/guardian
- ensuring ill children are excluded from school for the recommended length of time
- working closely with our local public health unit and following up-to-date control measures

#### **Here's What You Can Do At Home:**

There are also measures you can take at home to help prevent the spread of illness, including:

- follow the basic prevention measures of hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette and regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces

- monitor your child for signs and symptoms of flu-like illness
- keep your child home from school and other activities when ill
- keep children home until they no longer have symptoms of illness and are feeling well and able to fully participate in daily programs
- seek medical attention if your child becomes ill and is at increased risk for complications from the flu (i.e., if your child has an underlying illness)
- talk to your health care provider about seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines

Our board continues to work closely with the Health Unit so that appropriate precautions are taken to minimize the impact of H1N1 flu virus. We encourage you to find out more about H1N1 by visiting the Health Unit website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) or [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca).

If you have any specific questions about your child at school, please don't hesitate to contact me at **429-1081**.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Miryam Blasko