

October 15, 2009

To Parents and Staff of Vancouver Board of Education schools

**An update on H1N1 influenza virus (human swine flu) in Vancouver**

Several Vancouver schools have had many students away with flu caused by H1N1 influenza virus. The H1N1 virus is circulating widely in the Lower Mainland.

Almost all children have had illness that, while unpleasant, has not lasted long and has not been severe. If your child, other family members, friends or co-workers fall ill with cough, fever, and muscle aches it is certainly due to H1N1 flu virus at this time.

A safe and effective vaccine against H1N1 will be available in Vancouver at the beginning of November. I will send you details of when and where you can get the vaccine. The vaccine is free and there will be enough for everyone.

- If you or your child has a chronic condition like asthma, diabetes, heart or lung disease, or a problem with the immune system, **consult your doctor now to make a flu plan** so you can get a prescription for an anti-viral drug **quickly** if the flu strikes. Anti-viral drugs work best when started **as soon as possible after symptoms start**. Pregnant women also need a flu plan for quick treatment.
- If your child gets flu symptoms, he (or she) should stay at home until symptoms get better and he (or she) is well enough to return to normal activities.
- You can find helpful information about the H1N1 flu virus and how to look after those sick with it at: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/backtoschool/>, or call 8-1-1.

Remember, to keep flu from spreading, wash hands often, cough or sneeze into your sleeve (not your hands), and stay home if you are sick. The vaccine will be the best protection against this flu.

Yours sincerely,

*John Carsley MD*

John Carsley MD MSc FCRPC  
Medical Health Officer  
School Medical Officer, District 39