

1 September 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing this letter to all parents and guardians of school-aged children in the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington area to provide information on the pandemic H1N1 virus. This virus is a new strain of influenza, and there may be widespread influenza illness during the next influenza season. This possibility is particularly true for younger people in the community, because they may have less protection against this new virus. To date, this virus has been no more severe than the usual influenza virus. Despite the possibility of more cases of illness, it is not expected that there will be higher rates of complications.

There are several actions however, that every parent or guardian can take to minimize disruption in schools from the pandemic H1N1 virus. They include:

- Reinforce proper hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette with your children. KFL&A Public Health and the school board are working together to teach these techniques at the beginning of the school year.
- Keep children with influenza-like illness (fever, cough and other respiratory symptoms) at home until they are symptom free. This will help to prevent further influenza spread in our community and will give your child the best chance for a quick recovery.
- Pick up your child if he or she becomes ill at school as quickly as possible. Influenza has a sudden onset so your child may be well in the morning and develop symptoms of influenza during the school day. It is essential to make alternate care plans for every school day in case children become ill at school and parents and guardians are unable to provide care themselves.
- Inform your school of influenza-like illness in your child when you are calling in to report your child's absence. With this information, schools and KFL&A Public Health will be able to keep track of the spread of this infection in the community.
- Give serious thought to vaccinating your child with the pandemic H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available later in the autumn. The Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Dr. David Butler-Jones, has stated that every Canadian who wants pandemic H1N1 vaccine will have access to it. It is known that vaccine is the most effective and longest lasting way to prevent influenza.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding pandemic influenza, please look at the KFL&A Public Health Website ([www.kflapublichealth.ca](http://www.kflapublichealth.ca)) for further information and for links to reliable websites on pandemic H1N1. If you are unable to find answers to your questions there, you may contact the Communicable Disease Team at KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232.

Everyone's combined efforts will help us to reach the common goal of keeping students and staff well and attending school.

Yours truly,



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Medical Officer of Health

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