

DATE: November 6, 2009

TO: College Community

FROM: Dr. Rick Rowland, Manager, Health Services

SUBJECT: INFLUENZA UPDATE – Continuing to keep yourself protected

As we all know, the H1N1 Influenza is now widespread in the Ottawa area. The numbers are still rising, but may be flattening out now, as many infected people are getting better, while others are still getting sick.

The bad news is that it is quite contagious--the good news is that most people who become infected will not be seriously ill, even though the fever, body aches, and cough can be miserable to endure.

You can avoid catching it if you do not put the virus in your eyes, nose or mouth. (The virus will live for hours on hard surfaces, so clean your hands after touching computer keyboards, doors, desks, elevator buttons, taps, and other items that are touched by many people.)

H1N1 is showing a definite pattern of symptoms:

- Rapid onset of sore throat
- Fever, pains in various parts of the body
- Headache
- Extreme fatigue

Younger people are also likely to get nausea and vomiting, but not always. After a couple of days, the cough begins and will last at least one week. It is common to have a burning feeling in the chest in the first few days.

As expected with contagious diseases, it appears in “pockets” of infection, with some classes being infected more than others, and some areas of residence having more cases, which can easily spread to other areas unless precautions are followed.

The anti-viral medication “Tamiflu” is used for people with both ‘flu symptoms and another medical condition such as breathing problems, heart diseases, diabetes, the last months of pregnancy, immune system problems, or being seriously overweight. It is also used in anyone who has major illness from Influenza, even if they don’t have other risks. It requires a doctor’s prescription, and should be started within three days of the beginning of the illness.

Most people with H1N1 do not need Tamiflu, and will do fine with normal bed rest, increased fluid intake, and Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil) if fever or aches are severe. Stay away from classes and workplaces for at least five days. The cough will last longer, but does not mean you are still contagious.

Here are my fast facts and advice:

Get the vaccine. Right now it is reserved for higher risk groups, but will be widely available later this month. It does not matter if you get the vaccine with adjuvant or without, they are equally safe. Children from 6 months to 6 years are given a half-dose, and one shot is probably enough for them, although this is not yet official.

Don't put dirty things in your face. This may include your hands, unless you have washed them recently. Alcohol-based cleaner works just as well as soap and water, and better than water without soap.

Stay home when you are sick. You need the rest, and your friends need you to stop spraying them with viruses.

Call for medical advice before you go to a doctor. Most people will not need a prescription treatment, and can take care of themselves at home with home remedies like Tylenol or Advil. If you are having trouble breathing, having trouble thinking or speaking, or have other medical problems besides the 'flu, then you should see a doctor quickly to get proper prescriptions.

Don't go to a doctor just to get a note. The official college policy is to not insist on a doctor's note for a few missed classes during this 'flu season. This avoids wasting your time when you should be resting, and avoids using doctors' time for people who are not very sick.

Keep up with classes electronically. If you are not too sick, use Blackboard and friends' notes to keep up academically.

For more information on how you can protect yourself, please visit our [campus FAQ section](#) on our H1N1 website.