

Regarding the H1N1 FLU at the Georgia Elementary & Middle School

May 1, 2009

Dear Parents:

This letter will give you information about a new H1N1 flu identified in the United States and how that might affect us at the Georgia School.

Every year, some people get sick with the “seasonal” flu during the fall and winter months. However, as you have likely heard, there is a new flu virus that is making people sick with the same symptoms of the seasonal flu: fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache and body aches (sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea).

It appears that this new flu can be spread from person to person. You may have heard, and have concerns, that this H1N1 influenza virus has caused illness and death in some people in Mexico. This situation is evolving and we can expect that more cases will be identified. It’s important for you to know that most people who got sick in the United States have very mild illness.

At the time of this letter the CDC was at alert level PHASE 5- HIGH Alert; and no reported cases of the H1N1 flu in Vermont. Still, we want to do all we can to try to prevent transmission within Vermont and within the Georgia school.

Here are some of the steps we have taken at the Georgia School:

- Hand washing- We are reinforcing proper hand washing for ALL students at the beginning of the school day and prior to lunch.
- Disinfecting- Our custodians, teachers and staff are working together to disinfect surfaces daily- such as: water fountains, door handles, stair railings, desks, chairs and tables.
- Communication- Our nurses receive emails from the Vermont Department of Health regarding the signs and symptoms of this flu. They are working with the administration and staff regarding precautions and the (remote) possibility of school closing.

Actions you can take —

- If you or your child has recently returned from Mexico, monitor for symptoms of influenza for seven days after return. If symptoms occur (fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache and body aches and sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea), call your healthcare provider for evaluation (be sure to mention your recent travel history).

- **If you or your child is sick, stay home from work or school until you are better. Keep sick people away from people who are not sick. You must stay away from work or school stay home for at least 7 days after onset of this illness; or until free of symptoms (including fever) for 24 hours, which ever is longer.**
- Tell your school nurse or administrator about your child's symptoms so they can watch for other students with the same symptoms.
- Wash your hands well and often. Make sure your children do the same. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (sing the Alphabet song to keep track of time!).
- If you can't wash with soap and water, use a hand sanitizer. (Gels, rubs or hand wipes, as long as they have at least 60% alcohol.
- Remind children to keep their hands away from their face and don't touch mouth, nose or eyes.
- Cover your cough. Teach your children to do the same. Cough into the inside of your elbow, or into a tissue — not your hands!
- Throw away used tissues or hand sanitizer wipes. Teach your children to throw away tissues and then wash hands.
- Don't share water bottles, utensils, cups, etc. with others.
- If people in your home are sick with the flu and cannot see a healthcare provider, care for them at home — Give plenty of liquids (clear fluids with electrolytes). Use ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) for adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches. **DO NOT** give aspirin to children or teens. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, call a healthcare provider.

You can disinfect hard surfaces in your home within three feet of anyone who is ill. Use isopropyl alcohol or a solution made of one ounce bleach to one gallon of water.

For now, school will stay open — at this time, the Vermont Department of Health tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school, even students with history of travel if they don't have symptoms.

If the H1N1 flu continues to spread in the U.S. and if it causes severe illness, closing of schools may be considered. The purpose of closing schools is to keep children at home and away from others — to slow the spread of flu from person-to-person. If the school closes it is likely most daycares will be closed as well. Parents should consider their own work and daycare situations and plan accordingly for this possibility.

It's important to keep informed about what's happening. You can get more information from:

- CDC website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu
- Vermont Department of Education at www.education.vermont.gov or
- Vermont Department of Health at www.healthvermont.gov
- The federal government keeps current information for individuals and families at www.pandemicflu.gov

If you have questions call your healthcare provider or the Vermont Department of Health at 800-464-4343 or 524-7970

Sincerely,

Georgia Elementary & Middle School
 Mary Chiappinelli, RN
 Theresa Shaw, RN
 Flora Hurteau, PreK-4 Principal
 Frank Calano, 5-8 Principal

