



May 8, 2009

Dear Students, Families and Staff,

Our school district just received important updated information from our local Chelan/Douglas Health District regarding the H1N1 Flu virus. The following information was recently sent to us.

- Epidemiological information from case investigations and surveillance (statewide and nationally) suggests that this new strain has spread more widely in communities and will continue, at least for a time, to be transmitted from person to person, including children.
- Available information from health care providers, emergency departments and hospitals, as well as information from other states, suggests that so far the severity of illness from the new H1N1 influenza strain is not greater than the typical seasonal influenza that circulates in our community every year.

We know it is important to inform you that public health authorities are acutely aware of the educational and economic disruption caused by school closures, and are committed to using that approach only when truly necessary. At the same time, public health officials are continuing to monitor the situation and will alter policies as needed as the situation changes. Their priority continues to be the protection of our community's health.

What we are doing to avoid the spread of the virus:

- Each morning, we are asking that all parents/caregivers should assess all family members and especially all school-age children for symptoms of influenza.
- Each morning all school faculty assess themselves for symptoms of influenza.
- Students or faculty with influenza-like illness (fever of 100F or higher, cough, sore throat, body aches) should stay home and not attend school. All sick students and faculty should stay out of school for at least 7 days even if their symptoms resolve sooner. Students and faculty who are still sick at 7 days should continue to stay home from school until at least 24 hours after they have completely recovered.
- If a child or adult is ill with other (non-flu-like) symptoms, they should stay home at least one day to observe how the illness develops and until completely well for 24 hours. A few cases of H1N1 influenza begin as a gastro-intestinal or other atypical illness.
- Schools screen students and staff for signs of possible influenza illness upon arrival at school. Public health provides screening checklists and other tools to assist our schools in implementing these measures.
- Students and staff who appear ill at arrival or become ill at school will be promptly isolated and sent home.
- We are asking that persons who are ill should stay home and not go into the community unless they need medical care. Ill students should not attend alternative child care.
- As always, situations can be individualized. School authorities (working in collaboration with public health) may close school at their discretion. Parents may use their judgment regarding the risk and benefits of sending their children to school during this influenza outbreak, just as they would during a seasonal influenza outbreak.
- As is the practice with seasonal influenza, schools may be closed if larger numbers of students or faculty become ill and school functioning becomes disrupted.
- It remains important to encourage frequent hand washing among students and staff, and to cover coughs and dispose of used tissue properly.

Currently, there are no reported cases of H1N1 Influenza in our community. All schools are running on regular schedules with no interruptions. With your help we will avoid the spread of this virus.

Sincerely,

Brian Flones
Superintendent
Wenatchee School District