



June 12, 2009

Students/Parents/Guardians:

The World Health Organization has raised the Pandemic Level to Phase 6 for the H1N1 Influenza. This means that a global pandemic is underway. The increase to a phase 6 reflects broader spread of the virus internationally; it does not mean that the virus has become more dangerous. The Board is continuing to monitor the development and will follow the advice and guidance of provincial and local public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation. The Board has developed a comprehensive communications plan to ensure that all of its audiences are kept informed.

The local Health Units have provided the following information for students, staff, parents/guardians.

Signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu:

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include - fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

People who have symptoms of respiratory illness should contact their health care provider.

Focus on what you and your family can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Sneeze and cough into your upper sleeve or use a tissue. Discard tissue into the garbage immediately after use.
- Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- Stay home from school if sick, and stay away from sick people until they are better.

Advice for Talking to Children About H1N1 Influenza Flu Concerns:

As a parent you know how hard it can be for children to understand stressful situations, such as the current situation of novel H1N1 flu. Stressful situations often cause children to worry and have many questions as to why it is happening and how it can be fixed. It is important to remember to take care of your health and well being as well as the health of your children. If you cope with a stressful situation well, your children will also cope better. Your confidence and calm attitude will help your children ease their worries and feel safe and secure.

Here are some helpful tips on what you can do for your children:

- Keep activities as consistent and normal as possible even if your normal routine changes.
- Ask your children what they have heard about novel H1N1 flu. Answer questions openly and honestly, at a level they can understand. Be concrete and do not avoid difficult questions.
- Allow your children to express their feelings and concerns. Let them know it is okay to be afraid. Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
- Children always need to feel safe and loved. When they are uncertain about situations and afraid they may need even more affection and attention.
- Limit exposure to media and adult conversations about novel H1N1 flu. If your children are watching T.V. try to watch with them or make sure you are available to answer questions about what they have heard.
- As appropriate, encourage healthy behaviours: eating well, sleeping well, and playing outside.
- Use their questions as an opportunity to let them know what they can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu.

For additional information go to: www.chatham-kent.ca or www.lambtonhealth.on.ca