

*From the Office of the Medical Health Officer*

September 10, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Vancouver Coastal Health is working with School Districts to prepare for the H1N1 influenza. These are the Public Health recommendations for limiting the spread of this virus in schools.

H1N1 is one of a number of respiratory and other infectious diseases that can spread in schools. In many ways, H1N1 is like our usual seasonal influenza. However, one major difference is that most people are not immune. This fall, it is very important that we all do our part in supporting the health of all children in schools. You can help by:

- Ensuring your children have proper sleep and breakfast, as these are important to good health and learning
- Keeping ill children at home until they are symptom free and are able to fully participate in a normal school day
- Having arrangements to have someone look after a sick child at home, as well as to pick up a child from school if he/she becomes ill during school hours
- Teaching and reminding your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Being a role model for you children by coughing and sneezing into your elbow or into a disposable tissue and wash hands afterwards

Children with chronic health conditions (for example, asthma and diabetes) may be at higher risk for complications from H1N1 influenza. If you think your child may be at risk, please see your family doctor to get advice on how to best protect his/her health and what to do if he/she becomes ill.

Students are asked not to attend school wearing masks. Masks provide a false sense of security in the school setting. Healthy students do not need masks. Ill children should stay home to recover, rather than coming to school wearing masks.

When it is available later this year, there will be enough H1N1 vaccine for all who need and want it. The Federal Government will provide a detailed immunization plan later this fall. The schedules of regular school vaccine programmes have been adjusted in preparation for the H1N1 vaccine program.

At this time school closures are not being planned to control the spread of H1N1. Together, the school district and the health authority are monitoring the situation closely, and will provide updates as necessary. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the nurse assigned to your school at 604-233-3150. You can also call **HealthLink BC at 8-1-1**, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or are concerned about any illness/symptoms experienced by you or your children.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Martiquet  
Medical Health Officer