

Madrid, 7th September 2009

Dear Parents,

The A/H1N1 epidemic is creating concerns all over the world. In this letter we would like to share some information published by the Ministry of Health for non-university educational institutions concerning Influenza A(H1N1). The information follows guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO).

According to information available so far, most of the confirmed cases in Spain and in the Community of Madrid have presented a clinical picture without complications. Patients have responded well to treatment prescribed and shown with good progress towards recovery. This puts the health authorities in a state of alert but not alarm.

What is the new flu?

The new flu is an acute respiratory disease caused by a new influenza virus type A(H1N1).

What are the symptoms of influenza A(H1N1)?

The symptoms of influenza A in humans are similar to those of ordinary seasonal flu, including high fever (more than 38°C) accompanied by acute onset of one or various of the following symptoms: respiratory (cough, runny nose, breathing difficulty), headache, sore throat, muscle aches and other discomforts. Sometimes it may be associated with diarrhoea and vomiting.

How is influenza A(H1N1) transmitted?

The virus is transmitted between people in the same way as seasonal flu, especially when a person with flu coughs or sneezes. You can also acquire the disease by touching something with flu virus and then touching your mouth or nose.

For how long can a person transmit the virus to others?

It is estimated that the virus can be transmitted 24 hours prior to the onset of symptoms until 7 days after the onset of the same and in any case until at least 24 hours after symptoms cease.

Is there a vaccine against this virus?

The seasonal flu vaccine protects people against common strains of influenza virus. However, it is unknown whether the vaccine provides any protection against the new influenza virus A. A specific vaccine against influenza virus A is now underway. To date, 31 August 2009, the Inter-Territorial Board of Health agrees that the risk groups to be vaccinated are: Chronically ill people over the age of six months, pregnant women, health workers and workers in "essential services" such as the police forces, civil protection and fire brigade.

Is there any treatment?

Influenza A(H1N1) is treated with the same medications as common colds. Antiviral such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu[®]) and zanamivir (Relenza[®]) have demonstrated effectiveness against the virus that causes influenza, and are therefore being used, primarily for high-risk individuals and always under medical supervision.

What this means for schools:

It is recommended that the measures below, aimed at the whole school community, are explained to children and staff and implemented.

Personal measures:

- Cover your mouth and nose with paper tissues that are thrown away when coughing and sneezing.
- If you do not have paper tissues, cough and sneeze into the sleeve of your shirt to avoid contamination of hands.
- Wash hands often with soap (for 15-20 seconds), and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Do not share items of personal hygiene (toothbrushes, towels etc).
- Do not put objects in your mouth.

Measurements taken by the school (many already in place for a long time):

- Daily ventilation of classrooms, meeting rooms, dining hall and other common space.
- Frequent cleansing of surfaces, teaching furniture (tables and chairs) and commonly used objects (tableware, countertops, toilets, doorknobs, handrails, toys, telephones, keyboards, computer mice etc) with normal cleaning products.

All these recommendations must be communicated and reinforced with the students in the various opportunities presented by the school curriculum.

What action in particular will the Scandinavian School take?

- We are advised by health professionals and government agencies and will follow their recommendations at all times.
- We will encourage frequent washing of hands using antibacterial gels or normal soap depending on the situation.
- All hygiene materials used in the preschool will remain disposable.

- The ventilation of all spaces will be adequate.
- All school facilities and furniture will be cleaned as often as necessary. We will increase the frequency of cleaning of certain commonly used objects such as handrails, doorknobs etc...
- Any student diagnosed with influenza should remain at home until at least 7 days from the onset of the flue. Also, as a preventive measure of the disease and other flu-like respiratory illnesses, children with a temperature of 38°C or more should not attend school and should stay at home another 24 hours after cessation of the fever without using antipyretics (fever-reducing medicine).
- **The school will not administered fever-reducing medicine to pupils.**
- **To prevent the spread of flu and as a precaution, the school will send home any student or teacher who shows symptoms of being ill.**
- In case of the flu epidemic becoming more severe, the school may take additional measures to prevent the spread such as:
 - Screening of fever and flu symptoms of students and staff, upon arrive to the school
 - Cancel or postpone trips
 - Dismiss students from school for at least 7 days if they get sick
 - Etc.
- Any student who is within a risk group and who has been recommended by his/her doctor to wait for vaccination before starting school must serve written notice. To do this, submit a certificate from your doctor stating the reason why the child is recommended to stay away from school until vaccination has taken place.

Hopefully you find this information helpful. We are at your disposal for any clarification and will notify you of any further changes to the strategy of the school to prevent the spread of the flu.

Sincerely,

The school management & board

More information:

Comunidad de Madrid:

http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?cid=1142556042071&language=es&pagename=PortalSalud%2FPage%2FPTSA_pintarContenidoFinal&vest=1142545908620

Socialstyrelsen:

http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Amnesord/smittykydd/specnavigaion/Omraden/Smittsamma_sjukdomar/svininfluensa.htm

Smittskyddsinstitutet:

<http://www.smittskyddsinstitutet.se/hem/mest-efterfragat/svininfluensa/>

US Government:

www.flu.gov,

UK Government:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Swineflu/DG_177831