



October 23, 2009

Dear EICS Parent or Guardian,

A number of our schools have recently experienced an increase in numbers of students/staff ill with influenza-like illness. Influenza-like illness (ILI) is defined as: the sudden onset of respiratory symptoms with new cough and fever (not always present) with one or more of: sore throat; muscle aches; joint pain; weakness. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea may also be present.

Continuing to work closely with our health partners, we have notified Alberta Health Services (AHS), Public Health of this situation and have enhanced our control measures to limit transmission of illness. AHS believes this increased illness is likely due to pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza because this virus is the cause of most of the ILI that is being seen in school populations currently.

As recommended by Public Health, our schools are:

- Promoting basic infection control practices, such as respiratory hygiene, and frequent hand cleaning.
- Notifying parents if students become ill with ILI at school. Ill students will be kept separated from others until picked up by parents/ guardians.
- Advising ill students/ staff to stay home.
- Carrying out frequent environmental cleaning such as high touch surfaces.
- Monitoring student and staff absentee rates due to illness.

At this time, we would like to ask EICS parents to keep ill children at home until they are free of symptoms, feeling well, and are able to fully participate in all normal daily school activities; this will apply to all EICS staff as well. We are also encouraging and reminding our students to use respiratory hygiene (i.e. cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough and sneeze into their sleeve, dispose of used tissues and wash hands afterwards using soap and water, use hand sanitizer if there is no access to soap and water).

According to AHS, healthy students/staff with mild infections do NOT need to be tested. Individuals should have medical attention as soon as possible for early treatment **ONLY IF** they have any of the following:

- Chronic heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease
- Neuromuscular disorders
- Conditions requiring long term treatment with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- Conditions that can compromise the management of respiratory function or increase the risk of aspiration
- Diabetes
- Immune Suppression
- Blood disorders
- Pregnancy

AHS reiterates that immunization is the best protection against pandemic H1N1 influenza and encourages everyone to visit the following website for more detailed information.

<http://education.alberta.ca/>

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/>

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>

Sincerely,

Dr. Chris Diachuk,  
Superintendent of Schools