

FLU UPDATE

Overall message from DPH: everyone who can be vaccinated should be.

Dr. DeMaria, Medical Director Bureau of Infectious Disease MDPH

“It is crucial to understand how serious influenza is – seasonal flu is serious, as well as H1N1.”

Influenza like Illness (ILI) is defined as respiratory symptoms, cough, sore throat fever 100.4 or greater. Sudden onset, muscle aches and fatigue are characteristic of influenza.

According to DPH as of right now ILI=H1N1 – because seasonal flu has not hit yet. It matters not whether it is or not, we still need to isolate the illness.

Infectiousness drops off markedly when symptoms subside.

For Schools-

- Absenteeism – How will schools handle high rates of absenteeism (students as well as staff).
- Parents should be encouraged to make a plan for their children staying home when sick.
- Universal respiratory hygiene (not just when you are ill).
- Hand washing very important! Supervise use of hand sanitizer.
- Cleaning – Ordinary, sensible cleaning is fine. Multiple touch surfaces (keyboards, water fountains, bathrooms) perhaps more frequent cleaning but good hand hygiene is most important.

How long to stay home and isolate? - CDC policy has been adapted after observing the length of the illness during the outbreak last spring. Most flu is 3-5 days. Students and staff can return 24 hours after the end of fever (without fever reducing medications). This should be consistent and enforced. Important to isolate the illness. This is usually 4 days. No note from M.D. should be required as many physicians' offices do not want to see these patients when they are ill. You can still be infectious before symptoms appear and after the 5 days – that's why good hand hygiene, cough etiquette is important.

Vaccine – Only age group you cannot vaccinate are babies less than 6 mos. Egg allergic individuals.

Priority groups:

Pregnant women

Household contacts of infants less than 6 mos.

Children 6 mos -24 y.o. (especially 6 mos. – 4 y.o. and children with chronic medical conditions 6mos. – 19 y.o.)

Health care workers

H1N1 vaccine supply expected to increase rapidly over time so prioritization is not expected to last too long.

Even if you have had a flu like illness (and are sure it was H1N1) you can get vaccinated as soon as the acute illness has passed

A Community Flu Clinic with Nashoba Associated Board of Health is being planned for November at Blanchard (to be held after school). This is for H1N1 for target groups, possibly seasonal vaccine as well (depending on their supply).

www.mass.gov.flu