

Date: October 30, 2009

Re: H1N1 Influenza Update and Newsletter Inserts for Parents

Simcoe Muskoka H1N1 Clinics begin November 3rd

Immunization is the best way people can protect themselves and people around them from H1N1.

Public clinics open to all Simcoe Muskoka residents will be held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays Thursdays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from November 3rd to November 28th. More clinics may be added in December based upon demand.

The H1N1 vaccine is recommended for all those over six months old. **Those who are at higher risk of complications, severe disease and hospitalization are encouraged to be vaccinated early.** *These include:* healthy children from six months to five years old, people with chronic medical conditions under the age of 65, pregnant women, household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines (including those carrying infants 0-6 months old), healthcare workers involved in pandemic response or who deliver essential services, and people living in remote communities. **Those not considered at high risk should attend clinics after the first week.**

Students, parents and teachers are encouraged to receive the vaccine to protect themselves and others. Please note that in order to best serve the whole population, community based clinics are being offered as the most effective strategy to reach all who want the vaccine. Vaccine is also available at participating family physicians.

Free vaccination clinics for H1N1 flu will begin November 3rd in six locations, five days a week across Simcoe Muskoka. **For the first week of clinics we encourage those who are at higher risk of complications, severe disease and hospitalization to be vaccinated.** *These include:* healthy children from six months to five years old, people with chronic medical conditions under the age of 65, pregnant women, household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines (including those carrying infants 0-6 months old), healthcare workers involved in pandemic response or who deliver essential services, and people living in remote communities. **Those not considered at high risk should attend clinics after the first week.** A list of clinic locations and hours, along with up to date information about H1N1 and information about what to do if you or someone in your family is sick, is available on the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org. Please continue to check this website as information may change. You can also call *Your Health Connection*, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

This fall is a different flu season, with both seasonal flu and H1N1 flu in our communities. To help stop the spread of viruses in our schools, we are working closely with our local health unit.

H1N1 Symptoms: Watch for flu symptoms including sudden fever or chills, cough, sore throat, fatigue (lack of energy), and muscle or joint aches. Children under five years may vomit and have diarrhea. If you have symptoms and think you may have the flu you can find out what to do next by using a new on-line [self-assessment tool](#) offered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care at www.health.gov.on.ca

What is the contagious period? Students and volunteers should stay home until their fever has been gone for at least 24 hours and they are feeling well enough to do normal activities. Some people may experience a cough for days to weeks after an infection. Those with just a cough can return to school. Please let the school know if you are keeping your child home with flu symptoms. This helps the health unit keep track of how the flu is spreading.

Emergency Contact Info: Please make sure we have your up to date emergency contact information. This is important if your child is sick and needs to go home.

Preventing Illness: Please teach your children:

- to wash their hands with soap and water often or use hand sanitizer
- not to share personal items like pens, pencils, drinks or food
- to cough or sneeze into their sleeve, or into a tissue and then wash their hands

Clinics: Free vaccination clinics for H1N1 flu will begin November 3rd in six locations, five days a week across Simcoe Muskoka. **For the first week of clinics we encourage those who are at higher risk of complications, severe disease and hospitalization to be vaccinated.** *These include:* healthy children from six months to five years old, people with chronic medical conditions under the age of 65, pregnant women, household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines (including those carrying infants 0-6 months old), healthcare workers involved in pandemic response or who deliver essential services, and people living in remote communities. **Those not considered at high risk should attend clinics after the first week.** A list of clinic locations and hours, along with up to date information about H1N1 and information about what to do if you or someone in your family is sick, is available on the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org. Please continue to check this website as information may change. If you have questions, you can also call *Your Health Connection*, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

Recommendations for staff, students and volunteers who are ill:

Symptoms of H1N1 flu include sudden fever or chills, cough, sore throat, fatigue (lack of energy), and muscle or joint aches. People who have an influenza-like illness are generally advised to stay home and get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids and take basic pain or fever relievers. Most people who are ill do not need to see their health care provider as it increases the risk of spreading the flu to other people. However, people who develop severe symptoms such as shortness of breath or reduced level of

consciousness should seek medical attention. People who experience flu symptoms and have a chronic condition; are pregnant; have heart or lung disease; are receiving treatment for an illness, or live in an isolated community should contact their health care provider.

Students, staff and volunteers should stay home until their fever has been gone for at least 24 hours and they are feeling well enough to do normal activities. Some people may experience a cough for days to weeks after an infection. Those with just a cough can return to school.

There is a new on-line [self-assessment tool](#) offered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for those who think they may have the flu and are not sure what to do. Telehealth Ontario is also available for a consultation at 1-866-797-0000. Information about caring for yourself or a child who is sick with the flu, how to protect others from getting the flu, when to return to school or work, and when to seek medical advice is available on the health unit's website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.