

May 29, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This information has been provided to us by the Vermont Department of Health.

The new flu — novel H1N1 (swine) flu — is becoming more common in our region, with cases now laboratory-confirmed in several Vermont counties. One case has just been confirmed in a student who attends Rutland High School. This tells us that the illness is circulating in our communities.

It's important to know that H1N1 is a lot like regular (seasonal) flu. Every year, some people get sick with the "seasonal" flu during the fall and winter months. However, this new flu virus is making people sick now with the same symptoms of the seasonal flu: fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache and body aches (sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea).

Most people who get it have only a mild illness, and most get better on their own without medicine. But some people are more likely to get seriously ill. People who are at high risk of serious complications for the flu are children under age 5, adults over age 65, pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes or asthma. Flu can also be more serious for people who have heart, liver, kidney or blood disorders, and for people with neurological problems that cause trouble breathing.

You and your family can help keep flu from spreading by taking simple, everyday precautions:

- **Monitor children and yourself every day** for flu-like symptoms.
- **If you or your child is sick, stay home from work or school until you are better.** Keep sick people away from people who are not sick.
- **Tell your school nurse** or administrator about your child's symptoms so they can watch for other students with the same symptoms.
- **Wash your hands well and often.** Make sure your children do the same. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **If you can't wash with soap and water,** use a hand sanitizer. (Gels, rubs or hand wipes, as long as they have at least 60% alcohol).
- **Remind children** to keep their hands away from their face and don't touch mouth, nose or eyes.
- **Cover your cough.** Teach your children to do the same. Cough into the inside of your elbow, or into a tissue — not your hands!

- **Throw away used tissues** or hand sanitizer wipes. Teach your children to throw away tissues and then wash hands.
- **Don't share** water bottles, utensils, cups, etc. with others.
- **Most people who are sick with flu will not need to see a health care provider**, and can be cared for at home — Give plenty of liquids. Use ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) for adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches. **DO NOT** give aspirin to children or teens. If the ill person has underlying medical conditions, is having trouble breathing or is getting worse, call a healthcare provider.

School will stay open — At this time, the Vermont Department of Health tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school.

School closing would be considered if there are higher numbers of people ill with flu-like symptoms. The Health Department will work with schools to monitor this. The purpose of closing schools is to keep children at home and away from others — to slow the spread of flu from person-to-person.

If you have questions, call your school nurse or healthcare provider, or refer to the district web site.

It's important to keep informed about what's happening. You can get more information from:

- CDC website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu
- Vermont Department of Education at www.education.vermont.gov or
- Vermont Department of Health at www.healthvermont.gov
- The federal government keeps current information for individuals and families at www.pandemicflu.gov

Sincerely,

Mary E. Moran
Superintendent
Rutland City Public Schools