

September 28, 2009

Dear Student,

Welcome to the Fall Semester of 2009! As you prepare yourself for your chosen course of study, I would like you to also begin planning how you can remain healthy through the academic year. You have heard that an influenza strain, the H1N1 or “swine” flu, may be especially prevalent in the coming months. Since almost everyone will be susceptible to this infection, you should know how to prevent yourself from becoming ill and what you will do if you happen to become sick.

PREVENTING YOURSELF FROM BECOMING ILL

Influenza is spread by respiratory droplets. You can help yourself stay healthy by following these steps:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based cleansers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Get your influenza vaccine! It is hoped that an H1N1 vaccine will be available, free of charge, from the national stockpile by November. It is our plan to administer the vaccine on campus. Student Health has already received our seasonal flu vaccine, which will be available for a nominal fee. Watch for posters advertising our flu clinics.
- Don't share musical instruments or eating utensils. Infected people can spread the virus for as long as 24 hours BEFORE they show symptoms!
- If you don't have one, go buy a thermometer NOW! You can get a good digital thermometer for less than \$10. Feeling like you've had a fever is not an accurate way of knowing if you've actually had one.

STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU BECOME ILL

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are:

- Fever over 100° F
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache
- Chills
- Nausea and vomiting in some cases

The first step to take if you have these symptoms is to prevent spreading the illness to others. You do this by:

- 1) Isolating yourself! DO NOT go to class or to other public gathering places. Have your meals and other essentials brought to you by a “flu buddy” (see #2 below). It is okay to go in public to get to medical appointments.
- 2) Making an appointment with Student Health Services by calling 315-267-2377. Student Health can give you a permission slip for your flu buddy to get you your meals, can give you medications to help you feel better, and can monitor you for any complications.
- 3) Making arrangements to have someone take you home rather than remaining on campus. You must remain isolated until you have not had a fever (off anti-fever medications) for 24 hours. The physical constraints of this campus do not allow moving students out of their rooms to another living space until they are well. Going home will protect your roommates/suitemates from becoming ill and offers you a place where you can be monitored closely.
- 4) If you cannot go home, your roommates should make an appointment with Student Health Services to discuss how they can reduce their risk of becoming ill.
- 5) The following are signs of severe illness and require immediate medical care in the Emergency Room at Canton-Potsdam Hospital. Call University Police at 315-267-2222 to obtain an ambulance.
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Severe or persistent vomiting
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Thankfully, careful monitoring of the current flu situation seems to indicate that H1N1 is a fairly mild illness for most people, and usually lasts about 3 to 5 days. There is reason for careful planning and for taking some prudent precautions at this point, but not for panic. The administration of SUNY Potsdam will continue to work hard to make this flu season as safe as possible for everyone on campus. You can do your part by following these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Moose, MD

Director – Student Health Services