



# Newburyport Public Schools

## Influenza Update

October 15, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We continue to work closely with the local Board of Health and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) on strategies to manage H1N1 influenza. We are watching closely for evidence of H1N1 flu in our schools, and our nurses especially want to thank you for being so helpful when we've called to inquire about student illnesses. Following is the latest data we can provide on the status of H1N1 flu. Note that the information is continually changing, so refer regularly to our website for updates: [http://www.newburyport.k12.ma.us/swine\\_flu.html](http://www.newburyport.k12.ma.us/swine_flu.html).

### What is the current status of H1N1 flu?

As of Oct 9, thirty seven (37) states reported widespread influenza-like illness (ILI). Most people are not tested for influenza, so ILI (defined as a 100.0° fever with sore throat or cough) is used as a marker to monitor influenza. In those who are tested, H1N1 continues to be the predominant influenza strain nationally.

Massachusetts was one of the few areas still reporting only regional ILI; however cases are increasing, with elevated levels of ILI activity mostly in the central and inner metro Boston regions of the state. The illness being seen continues to be relatively mild, but there are reports of serious illness, with some deaths related to the H1N1 flu. For more information, see [www.ma.gov/flu](http://www.ma.gov/flu).

In Newburyport, we are beginning to see students who have ILI symptoms. Similar to the rest of the state and country, we expect to see an increase in ILI activity in the coming weeks.

### What about the H1N1 vaccine?

The MA Department of Public Health (MDPH) reports they have distributed small quantities of H1N1 vaccine to various hospitals, community health centers, pediatricians, and some obstetricians. More vaccine is expected from the federal government each week.

If you or your child(ren) are in one of the high priority groups for H1N1 vaccine, contact your doctor to discuss scheduling an appointment to get H1N1 vaccine. Our local board of health is planning for H1N1 vaccination clinics as soon as enough vaccine is available, which is expected to be in November and December. Clinics will be listed at <http://flu.masspro.org> as they are scheduled.

#### The high priority groups for H1N1 vaccine are as follows:

- pregnant women,
- persons who live with or provide care for infants aged <6 months (e.g., parents, siblings, and daycare providers),
- health-care and emergency medical services personnel,
- persons aged 6 months--24 years, and
- persons aged 25--64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications.¶

In the meantime, you can find a public flu clinic offering seasonal flu vaccine by visiting <http://flu.masspro.org>.

### What should parents and guardians be doing now?

#### Public health recommendations remain unchanged:

- Continue to help stop the spread of flu by **covering coughs and washing hands**.
- As the H1N1 vaccine becomes available, **get your children vaccinated**. There are many myths circulating about the H1N1 vaccine—see the attached information for the facts.
- **Keep your child home if he or she becomes ill. Children must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications** (such as Tylenol or Motrin) **before they can return to school**. (Note: Never give aspirin to treat a fever in children under 19 unless instructed by a physician.)
- **If you call to report your child absent, please help us by reporting when they have ILI symptoms.**
- For the most up-to-date information and helpful links, visit the District website at [http://www.newburyport.k12.ma.us/swine\\_flu.html](http://www.newburyport.k12.ma.us/swine_flu.html).

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak with your child's school nurse. Stay well!

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