

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health

Public Health
277 Victoria Street
5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1W2

October 19, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

With the new school year underway, I would like to tell you about the actions your school is taking in collaboration with Toronto Public Health to prepare for H1N1 – the new flu virus that is circulating in the community. We would also like to provide you with information about what you can do to protect yourself and your family, including a flu checklist to keep handy.

This year it's a different flu season. There are two types of flu viruses circulating in the community – the seasonal flu and H1N1. H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory illness that causes fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and possibly nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea—just like seasonal flu (influenza).

Your school is taking the appropriate steps to help prevent the spread of influenza, including:

- Consulting with Toronto Public Health on infection prevention and control
- Ensuring soap and water is available for hand washing (as well as hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available)
- Placing posters around the school on proper hand washing, and coughing and sneezing etiquette
- Frequently cleaning commonly touched surfaces/items
- Watching for signs and symptoms of influenza-like illness among students and staff
- Providing Toronto Public Health with absenteeism levels in school; if a school appears to have an increase in flu-like illness, the school board will reinforce infection control messages and consult with Toronto Public Health as necessary; and,
- Posting helpful information and links on the TDSB public website at www.tdsb.on.ca

Vaccination is the most effective way to help prevent the flu. There are also other steps you and your children can take to help prevent the flu:

- **Wash or sanitize your hands frequently and thoroughly**
- **Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue, not your hand**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose**
- **Do not share personal items**
- **Stay home if you are ill. Let your school know the reason for your child's absence.**

If you or your child shows any signs of flu-like illness, contact your physician as you normally would for advice. You can also contact TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

For more information, visit Toronto Public Health's website www.toronto.ca/health/ or call 416-338-7600. Information about upcoming H1N1 vaccine clinics will be posted soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Byaffe".

Barbara Yaffe, MD, MHSc., FRCPC
Director, Communicable Disease Control
& Associate Medical Officer of Health

