

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### **Influenza: H1N1 and Seasonal flu**

To the Parents/Teachers/Staff and Student Body of Mechanicville Public Schools:

The flu season officially began on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and already we have seen both Seasonal and H1N1 (Swine) flu strains cause illness in the Mechanicville City School District. I saw my first case of Seasonal influenza the week of October 12<sup>th</sup>, and now H1N1 on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in 5 students who attend Mechanicville Middle/High School. I suspect from this initial outbreak that the H1N1 virus will spread quite quickly through the student body and the community at large. Therefore, I am sending this message out with the hope of inspiring a calm and reasoned approach for all of us during this very active 2009-10 flu season.

I am meeting with the Mechanicville School Board and Dr. McCarthy (Superintendent) on October 28<sup>th</sup> to formalize our strategy-and update the plan currently in place-knowing now that we have our first confirmed cases of H1N1. As you may know, some local school districts have closed their doors recently due to widespread illness. Though we hope that this will not be the case here, we are prepared to act accordingly if the need arises.

For the most accurate and up-to-date information during this flu season, go to the following web sites:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)

[www.schoolhealthservicesny.com/h1n1.cfm](http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com/h1n1.cfm)

[www.saratogacountyny.gov](http://www.saratogacountyny.gov)

For those of you with no internet capabilities, call the CDC at 1-800-232-4636, the Saratoga County Public Health Department at 518-584-7460, or the New York State Department of Health at 1-800-808-1987.

When it comes to preventing the spread of influenza or any viral illness, follow these simple rules:

- 1) Get vaccinated if you haven't already. **Both** the Seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine are **safe**.
- 2) Wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands...
- 3) If you are at home and think you might be ill, **STAY HOME!**  
- Call your doctor for guidance or dial 911 if you or your child are in imminent danger.
- 4) If you are at school and think you might be ill, **GO DIRECTLY TO THE NURSES STATION** for evaluation.
- 5) The classic symptoms of influenza are: fever, cough, headache, body aches, fatigue/malaise
- 6) Your doctor can perform a Rapid Flu Test in the office to determine if you have influenza.
- 7) There **are** prescription anti-viral medications for people who are ill with the flu **and** to protect those who care for or have come into contact with someone who has the flu.
- 8) You should not go back to school unless you have been 'fever-free' without the use of fever-reducing medicine for at least 24 hours.

Remember, we are at the beginning of a very long and likely active flu season, and as the parents/guardians of our children we are their primary caregivers. They are depending on us to act responsibly, so please do not put others at risk by sending a sick child to school. I hope this newsletter has helped. Good luck and good health to all.

Carl W. Sgambati, M.D.

Mechanicville City School District Physician