

## H1N1 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

### OCTOBER 1, 2009

What is the protocol for schools when students/staff get H1N1 flu?

Students or staff who get ill with flu-like symptoms should go home and stay at home until they are symptom-free, feeling well and able to fully participate in all activities. If a child develops flu-like symptoms at school, he/she should be promptly isolated in an area separate from others with adequate supervision until they can be picked up. Fraser Health does not recommend the use of masks.

Why aren't schools being considered for closure when H1N1 is evident at the site?

Much more is known about the virus now than in the spring. Fraser Health's Medical Health Officer has advised that identifying and following up on individual students with H1N1 flu virus is not necessary or helpful in limiting the spread of infection. What is effective is scrupulous personal and environmental hygiene including frequent hand-washing, regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and ensuring that staff and students who are ill go home and stay home until they are symptom-free.

Who do I consult if my schools' absenteeism is over 10%?

Schools are expected to continue to report school absenteeism of greater than 10% due to flu-like illness to their School Health Nurse, who can be reached via the local Health Unit. Please exclude from your calculation any absences for other known reasons. If you consult your PH Nurse, let Cheryl Quinton, Communications Manager know as well so that she can pass the information along to the appropriate board office staff.

What if my site has pregnant staff members, or those with underlying health conditions?

There is currently no Public Health recommendation that individuals with underlying risk conditions or pregnant women stay away from work or school. H1N1 is a community-based infection and is circulating widely in BC. Individuals with risk conditions should consult with their physicians to ensure that they are aware of the signs and symptoms of infection, and seek care promptly for early treatment should they become ill.

Are hand sanitizers a viable option?

While hand washing is preferred, in areas where hand-washing sinks are not available, supervised use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers is an acceptable alternative, provided hands are not visibly dirty.

What about vaccinations?

H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available sometime in November. Wendy Bennett will provide more information when it becomes available.