

January 9, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Re: Influenza-like illness (ILI)

As you are likely aware, Alberta is currently experiencing increased rates of illness due to seasonal influenza. At this time, influenza in Alberta is predominantly being caused by the H1N1 Influenza-A virus. Across Alberta, there have been over 1400 lab-confirmed cases, along with nine deaths. This strain is known to cause more illness in younger individuals, compared to older adults. Influenza can cause respiratory illness and easily be spread from person to person through coughing and contact with contaminated secretions from the nose and mouth.

At this time, we would like to share the following information and recommendations:

- Influenza caused illness is characterized by fever, cough, aches, runny nose and tiredness, and usually lasts for 4-6 days;
- Influenza can be spread to others when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can survive on surfaces for a variable length of time;
- Do not send your child to school if he/she is ill;
- If your child is ill, please keep him/her at home until symptoms (cough, fever, tiredness) have been absent for a full 24 hours;
- Ensure that your child and others in your household perform hand hygiene frequently by washing their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub;
- Promote and remind your child and family members to practice respiratory hygiene:
 - cough and sneeze into their sleeve or cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing;
 - throw away used tissues immediately after sneezing, coughing or wiping their nose; and
 - wash their hands immediately after discarding the tissue with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Clean surfaces that are frequently touched such as door knobs, light switches and bathroom taps.

Healthy children with mild infections usually do not need to be routinely tested for influenza. Individuals with symptoms consistent with influenza, who have chronic medical conditions or who are pregnant, may wish to seek medical advice about early treatment.

Health Link Alberta (toll free 1-866-408-5465) can be contacted if you have any further questions about influenza, and how to manage the care of loved ones at home.

Sincerely,



Christopher Sikora, MD MPH MSc CCFP FRCP(C)
Lead Medical Officer of Health – Edmonton Zone