

September 14, 2009

Dear students:

Ottawa Public Health wants all students to be prepared for the upcoming influenza (flu) season, which will be a different flu season from previous years. There will be many types of flu viruses circulating – seasonal flu viruses and the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus (pH1N1).

Flu season typically runs from mid-October to the end of April — a time when you have mid-term and final exams, vacation and spring break. You need to know the best ways to protect yourself from colds and flu, including pH1N1.

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.
2. If no facilities are available use a 60-90 per cent alcohol-based hand rub
3. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or arm
4. Stay away from classes and avoid contact with others if possible, if you are ill
5. Get your free flu shot

Also, you may be sharing more than you think. Avoid sharing food, water bottles, cosmetics and even sports equipment. This will help stop the spread of viruses to your friends, classmates and family.

In the event that you do become ill, have supplies on-hand like tissues and cold medication. Find a friend or family member who could potentially help you with errands and groceries as you stay away from people and recover.

We are here to help. For further updates on seasonal flu and pH1N1 in Ottawa you are encouraged to visit our web site at ottawa.ca/health or consult with your school's health services department. You are welcome to call us at the Ottawa Public Health Information Line at 613-580-6744.

Best of luck with your studies throughout the year.

Dr. Isra Levy
Medical Officer of Health

