

17 September 2009

Dear Parents,

As you may know H1N1 is spreading easily from person to person and school-age children are among the groups most affected. We are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu in Qatar Foundation schools. We want to keep the school open and functioning as normally as possible, while maintaining the health of students and faculty. **We need your help to do this.**

We are working closely with the Communicable Disease Control Section at the Department of Public Health to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take. We are implementing the following steps to prevent the spread of flu within our school.

- **Educating students**, beginning on the first day of school on hand cleaning, how to cover their mouths when coughing to prevent the spread of germs, and other procedures to prevent the spread of germs.
- **Extending the time sick students or staff stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away.
- **Conducting active fever and symptom screening** of students and staff upon arrival at school. School staff will ask students about symptoms suggestive of a respiratory infection such as fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches and fatigue. Any student who has at least 2 of these symptoms will be separated from others, offered a surgical mask, and sent home as soon as possible.
- **We will continue to clean** keyboards, doorknobs, etc. at school and encourage healthy practices with all our students.
- **Hand sanitizers** (pump bottles) will be placed in every classroom. We would encourage you to give your child their own small bottle of sanitizer to carry in their backpacks as well.
- **Attached to this** you will find a handout for parents published by the CDC. Please read carefully.
- **Following the suggestions** of CDC to avoid large community gatherings, we have decided to **cancel all back to school events scheduled for the beginning of the year.** We will try to set up a similar program for later in the year.
- **Planning for all possibilities**, the faculty is setting up procedures for learning to continue in the event school should we need to close. This will permit minimal interruptions to learning. Information on these procedures will be shared during the first few weeks of school.
- **Increasing social distances** (the space between people) at school. We are evaluating all situations that bring students together, such as assemblies and other activities to make sure there can be an appropriate amount of space between students to maintain health.

Here are a few things you can do to help prevent flu conditions from becoming more severe.

Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.

Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.

Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

Extend the time sick children stay home for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner and the patient has been free of symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines.

If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Don't send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are sick at school will be sent home. Staying home when sick will allow your children to rest and allows you to monitor their health closely. Keeping your sick child home is the responsible thing to do. It protects fellow students and school staff, especially those who are at higher risk of severe illness from the flu. In addition, we ask that you inform the school if your child is sick with the flu.

Already had H1N1? Please let the school nurse know if your student, or family members, have already been diagnosed as having had H1N1.

For more information, you can call the flu Hotline set up by the Department of Public Health at 6740948; 6740951. We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Naert
Director

Tina Santilli
Principal

Zeta Hitchcock
Head of Clinical Services