

May 4, 2009

RE: Swine Flu (H1N1 Virus)

Dear Parents:

You are all aware of the likelihood that we will probably face an influenza outbreak this year. Some Adventist schools have already had to close due to outbreaks. Influenza is a viral infection causing respiratory symptoms as well as fever and aches and pains. Sometimes it is a cause of diarrhea and vomiting. The excitement in the media is because this is a new strain derived from a cross breeding of human- with swine-type influenza viruses. It is a new H1N1 virus and consequently its virulence or strength is unknown. We have been subject to a lot of scary talk about potentially devastating outcomes of a new influenza outbreak over the last couple of years but in reality we do not know how serious the illness may be. It has been reassuring that most people outside of Mexico have not had overwhelming illness. Even regular seasonal influenza can be expected to cause deaths in those with weak immunity so at the present we cannot describe the severity one can expect with this infection. It is the very young and the elderly that often are the prime candidates for influenza but because many young adults have never been immunized they, too, may be at greater risk as the H1N1 antigens have been represented in some of the seasonal vaccines given in the past.

We are asking you for calm cooperation and assistance by keeping abreast of the situation by watching for news updates and we can expect that the Center for Disease Control will issue guidelines on a regular basis as to what the best course is for us to follow. We are indeed fortunate to have some of the finest scientists in the world to advise us and we will be wise to give heed to their advice.

It is mandatory that should your child be ill, he/she be kept at home and medical advice be sought from your healthcare provider. We might mention that aspirin should not be used as a means of controlling fever in young children as it can cause a severe syndrome called Reyes Syndrome. Acetaminophen is a better option and, of course, tepid sponging may be useful, but any child so ill requires medical attention. The infection is at times associated with pneumonia which manifests as a fever and cough, but also with rapid breathing. Severe cases may cause the patient to have a bluish tinge to their lips; such children require URGENT care. Fortunately, this current strain seems to be susceptible to treatment with antiviral medications which your doctor may prescribe should they suspect the "flu," and they will also take tests to prove the diagnosis.

Prevention is, of course, the best approach. The simple, basic measures of covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, disposing of tissues carefully in the trash or toilet, washing hands, and wiping off contaminated surfaces with alcohol or a bleach solution will prove helpful. You will need to wear a mask if caring for a sick individual to protect yourself and use a cover gown which you leave in the patient's room. A sick person should be confined to their room and bathroom, so as to avoid contaminating the whole house. Your doctor may provide medicine in situations of a proven case. It would be wise not to share towels or any other personal hygiene articles at this time. Clothes, bedding, towels and eating utensils should be washed in hot water and dried in a drier if available.

The virus is transmitted in tiny droplets or on contaminated hands and surfaces so obsessive cleanliness is appropriate at this time.

Should the pandemic prove to be sufficiently serious we may issue further advice in compliance with the public health authorities and will monitor the situation with vigilance.

We do not wish to foster an atmosphere of panic which is always out of place, but to assure you, as the school administration, that we are taking the situation seriously and will do everything in our power to safeguard the health of your children and our students.

The Center for Disease Control, Pan American Health Organization, World Health Organization, and the church health, [www.health20-20.org](http://www.health20-20.org), websites are helpful and updated on a regular basis.

We hope this reassures you as to our monitoring of the situation.

Yours in Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry D. Blackmer".

Larry Blackmer,  
NAD Vice President for Education