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Dear Parents/Guardian and Staff:

August 31, 2009

We will be entering another influenza (Flu) season in the Fall. Every year there are a number of flu viruses circulating in the community. H1N1 influenza A is one of the flu viruses that will be circulating in the community. To date, this flu virus has been milder than other previous flu viruses. Flu is a respiratory illness with symptoms which include:

- * Fever
- * Sore Throat
- * Fatigue
- * Runny Nose
- * Lack of Appetite
- * Coughing
- * Muscle Aches

Some individuals may also experience:

- * Vomiting
- * Diarrhea

All flu viruses cause similar symptoms but the severity of these symptoms and flu complications can vary with different flu viruses. As well, high risk groups for the flu can vary depending on the strain of the flu virus. For example, some flu viruses are more vulnerable for children (ages 6 to 23 months), adults 65 and older as well as those with pre-existing conditions. High risk groups for H1N1 are still being identified.

How do flu viruses spread?

Flu viruses can spread easily via droplets that are coughed or sneezed into the air by someone who has the flu. A person becomes infected with the flu when these droplets come in contact with his/her nose, mouth or eyes. The flu virus is also found on the hands of people sick with the flu and on surfaces they touch.

How to stay healthy during the flu season?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water is not near you then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way. If you are going to touch your face ensure you clean your hands.
- Cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve or use a tissue, not your hand. Dispose of tissues immediately.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people
- Stay home from school or work if you are sick with the flu and limit contact with others if you are sick. A person can be infectious until symptoms are gone.

Flu Vaccines

Two different flu vaccines are being developed this year. One vaccine will be for the H1N1 virus while the other vaccine will help protect you against the other flu viruses expected to be circulating in the fall (seasonal influenza). These two vaccines will not be available at the same time. The seasonal influenza vaccine will be available in early October. The H1N1 vaccine is not expected to be available until later in the fall (Nov/Dec).

Due to limited public health staffing, we are no longer able to offer flu clinics within schools but will be offering expanded community flu clinics.

Community flu clinic dates and times will be advertised through local media, posted on our website www.hpechu.on.ca as well as accessible through the health units' flu line 613-966-5513 ext. 665 (**active Sept. 14 2009**).

If you have any questions about the flu (influenza) including H1N1 please call one of the following numbers:

- Health Unit Communicable Disease intake line (613) 966-5513 ext. 349

OR

- TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000

Visit the following websites to learn more about the flu:

- Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit - www.hpechu.on.ca
- Ministry of Health and Long Term Care - www.gettheflushot.ca
- Public Health Agency of Canada - www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza



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