

Questions and Answers for Parents / Guardians

As we begin a new school year, we are aware of the potential for a heightened flu season this year. We want to share the most current information with you.

As you know, the management of the H1N1 flu is guided by local Health Units. Please consult the Board website, www.tldsb.on.ca, for the most current school-based information and links to our Health Unit sites.



What are the symptoms of H1N1 and other influenza-like illness (ILI)?

The virus will resemble seasonal influenza in the majority of cases. The acute onset of respiratory symptoms with fever and cough **and** one or more of the following symptoms:

- sore throat;
- muscle aches;
- joint pain;
- or weakness

In children under 5, gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present and fever may not be prominent.

Individuals exhibiting flu-like symptoms of sufficient severity that require medical attention should contact their health care provider or call Telehealth Ontario 24/7 line at 1-866-797-0000.



How will I know my child has H1N1?

You will not know. In the majority of cases, symptoms resemble seasonal flu, and health authorities are not testing for H1N1.



How is the Board responding to H1N1?

The Board is working in close co-operation with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) and the Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge Health Unit (HKPRDHU). The Board is ready and able to take whatever advice or action our Health Units recommend.



Will the Health Unit contact TLDSB if someone in the school has H1N1?

Our local Health Units are not reporting individual confirmed cases. This is consistent with the World Health Organization (WHO). H1N1 is considered a virus that is in all of our communities. The virus continues to resemble seasonal influenza with mild symptoms in the majority of cases.



What does it mean when the World Health Organization (WHO) identifies Phase Six Pandemic?

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization raised the pandemic alert level to Phase 6. This phase is declared when there is evidence of sustained community transmission in more than one WHO region. The declaration is based on the spread of the virus, not the severity. These phases refer to global pandemic awareness. Local Health Units will determine our local pandemic awareness phase.



What can I do to protect my child against H1N1?

To stay healthy generally and prevent the spread of influenza and other infections:

- Wash hands well and often with soap and warm water;
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or arm;
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose;
- Practice social distancing (minimizing contact with others) while symptomatic;
- Keep your child home if ill and return only if he or she no longer has a fever and is feeling better;
- Keep doing what you normally do, but stay home if you are ill.



What specific plans are in place in the schools?

1. Principals and school staff are monitoring the general health condition of students.
2. If students become ill:
 - a) They will be escorted to the office and isolated from other students, under supervision. They will be reminded to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, and to practice frequent hand hygiene;
 - b) If required, you will be called to pick up your child;
 - c) You are requested to pick up your child as soon as possible;

d) You will be advised to keep your child at home and return your child only when he/she is feeling better and no longer has a fever.

3. Teachers are reminding students of the importance of regular, thorough hand-washing, and good personal hygiene. Remind your child not to share food, beverages, and other personal items.
4. Custodians will continue to provide thorough and effective cleaning.



Does my child need to wear a medical mask at school?

The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend the wearing of medical masks in school settings to protect against contracting the H1N1 flu virus. Evidence shows that this is not effective in preventing transmission of influenza in the general public. People often use masks incorrectly, or contaminate themselves when putting masks on and taking them off, which could actually increase the risk of infection.

We are concerned about the fear and panic that may result from the wearing of masks, especially among young children.



My child has an underlying medical condition. Should I be doing anything differently?

Those at higher risk of complications from the flu should speak with their doctor as soon as possible *if they develop a flu-like illness*. If students are sick, they should stay home and return to school only if they no longer have a fever and are feeling better.



Will the Board provide hand sanitizers?

The Board will supply hand sanitizer for classrooms in portables, as recommended by our Health Units.

Students may bring their own travel-size container of hand sanitizer to school. These personal items are not to be shared with others.

Regardless of whether or not students have their own personal hand sanitizer, all students are to wash their hands as per the hand-washing information on posters.



Will you close schools?

School closures are not recommended at present. We will follow the directive of our Health Units.



Should I keep my child home from school to prevent illness?

Children who are healthy are expected to come to school.



Are drinking fountains being turned off?

No. Regular practices and precautions should be followed (i.e. students are being reminded to avoid touching the spout of drinking fountains.)



Are breakfast programs, hot lunch programs, and other activities involving food being cancelled?

As per standard practice, elementary breakfast programs and hot lunch programs will continue.



Will clubs and co-curricular activities be cancelled?

At this point in time, co-curricular activities will continue. Any decision to cancel programs or trips is made by the Senior Administration in conjunction with our Health Units.



Where can I obtain more information about H1N1?

Trillium Lakelands District School Board website www.tdsb.on.ca has the latest information and links to our two local health units on the home page.

All are encouraged to obtain accurate timely information through this avenue.