

## **Pandemic H1N1 flu virus update**

September 1, 2009

Dear staff members, volunteers, and parents:

As you prepare for the start of a new school year, Peel Public Health would like to update you on the following:

- the status of the H1N1 flu virus in Peel
- what to expect this fall
- how to reduce the risk of spreading flu in schools.

This fall, we expect to see two categories of flu viruses in our communities – seasonal flu viruses and the pandemic H1N1 flu virus. Influenza vaccination is still the best way to prevent getting the flu. Currently, two different vaccines are being developed to protect against seasonal influenza and H1N1 influenza.

Over the summer months, Peel Public Health has been monitoring the H1N1 flu virus activity in Peel and working with numerous partners on an effective, coordinated response to both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu virus.

Peel Public Health, along with provincial and federal health authorities, does not recommend school closure as a means to control the spread of influenza virus. Since the virus is circulating in our community, the risk of infection is not lowered or avoided by keeping children out of schools. They may still be exposed to the virus in such community settings as malls or movie theatres.

Given that the H1N1 flu virus is circulating in our community, Peel Public Health will not notify schools of individual H1N1 flu cases. We are working closely with school boards to monitor illness over the upcoming flu season. Peel Public Health will continue to carefully assess any changes and review recommended actions should it be necessary.

The best ways to reduce the risk of becoming ill or spreading flu viruses include:

**Monitor your health:** If you develop flu-like signs and symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue), stay home from school or work. Contact your health care provider if symptoms are severe.

**Practise good hygiene:** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are spread this way.

**Wash your hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after you cough or sneeze.

Peel Public Health recommends that you get your annual flu shot this fall. Seasonal flu shots should be available beginning in October. Vaccination against the pandemic H1N1 flu virus will be available later in the fall. Peel Public Health will provide more information about the H1N1 vaccination once details become available.

Peel Public Health will continue to work closely with the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board to provide updates when needed.

For more information on the H1N1 flu virus, visit [www.peelregion.ca](http://www.peelregion.ca) or call 905-799-7700, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to speak to a health professional.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Dooling". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Dr. Kathleen Dooling, MPH, CCFP, FRCPC  
Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Region of Peel