



## *Come Grow with Us*

### **Health education and resource information for child care providers**

#### **This year it's a different flu season.**

Experts predict that the H1N1 flu virus will be the main flu strain circulating this fall, more so than the typical seasonal flu viruses.



#### **What does this mean for the Child Care community?**

There are several key things to remember. The H1N1 flu virus, like any flu virus, spreads quickly and easily between children, who in turn can spread the virus to their parents and other care providers. Child care staff can protect themselves and the children in their centre by understanding how the H1N1 flu virus spreads, knowing the importance of good infection control measures, and getting immunized when the vaccine becomes available to them.

Flu viruses, including the H1N1 virus, spread when a person with the flu coughs or sneezes. The respiratory droplets that spray into the air carry the virus in them. If you breathe in the virus, or touch a contaminated surface and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth, you can become infected with the flu.

You can protect yourself against the flu by following good infection control practices in your centre, and teaching these practices to the children in your care who are able to understand them. More information about infection control measures is provided on the other side of this newsletter.

The other important way to protect against the H1N1 flu virus is to receive the H1N1 flu vaccine. In November, the H1N1 flu vaccine will be available to everyone who wants to be immunized. It will be available first to those who most need it. They are:

- People with chronic medical conditions, under age 65 years of age
- Pregnant women
- healthy children from six months to five years old
- Persons residing in remote and isolated settings or communities
- Health care workers involved in pandemic response or the delivery of essential health care services
- Household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or who may not respond to vaccines

York Region Community and Health Services will be hosting several H1N1 immunization clinics throughout the Region. Please watch your local newspapers or go to [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) for clinic times, dates and locations.

#### **Seasonal flu vaccine**

In October, the seasonal flu vaccination is being offered to people over 65 years of age and residents of long-term care facilities. It will be available to anyone six months of age or older in January after the H1N1 flu vaccinations.



## Preventing the spread of flu viruses

Practicing the following infection control precautions can help to keep everyone in your child care centre healthy and prevent the H1N1 flu virus and other germs from spreading.



1. Wash your hands well and often, and especially:
  - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing into your hands
  - After going to the washroom
  - Before and after visiting someone who is sick
  - After playing outside
  - After playing with animals
  - Before eating or drinking
  - Before and after handling food
  - If hands look or feel dirty
  - After handling garbage

### Tips for handwashing:

- Lather hands with soap (liquid soap is preferred because it is “one time use”) for a minimum of 15 seconds
- Make sure you cover all surfaces of your hands including the back of hands, between fingers, wrists, thumbs, and under the fingernails
- To help children judge the length of 15 seconds, ask them to sing a song like “Happy Birthday” or the “ABC’s”, while they lather their hands
- Use paper towel to turn off the tap after drying your hands

If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains between 60 and 90 per cent alcohol. Hand sanitizers are only effective on visibly clean and dry hands.

2. Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue, not your hand. Dispose of tissues immediately and wash your hands.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
4. Stay home when you are ill and limit your contact with others.
5. Clean and disinfect shared surfaces.

For more information about preventing the spread of H1N1 flu virus in your child care centre, please refer to the *Child care facility guidelines for the prevention and management of the H1N1 flu virus*. This document, as well as other H1N1 flu virus information, can be found at [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) by clicking on the H1N1 flu virus banner.

