

October 27, 2009

Dear Students,

As you no doubt have heard, the spread of H1N1 on campus has taken a dramatic upturn in the last few days. We had diagnosed 40+ cases as of 1:00p.m. today. The attack rate for this virus is estimated to be about 30-40%. We therefore expect around 300 students to become infected at some time.

The good news is that virtually all the cases we have seen have been fairly mild (i.e. not requiring hospitalization and/or medication) and guys have been able to return to campus and classes in 4-5 days. However, this does not mean we won't see more severe cases. It is therefore critical that students continue to practice good hygiene and to stay away from people who are coughing or appear ill.

### **Health Center and local medical practices becoming overwhelmed**

Unfortunately, we have reached the point that the Health Center will not be able to see every symptomatic student, even with both physicians working. The influenza epidemic throughout Montgomery County is starting to overwhelm the local medical delivery system – exactly, and unfortunately, what we expected to happen at some point.

We are going to have to triage students so we only see the sickest ones. Nurse Lamb will be the person who will assess symptomatic students and determine if they need to be seen by Dr. Douglas or me. She will screen people via phone or e-mail initially and may ask students to come see her to check their temperature and to assess their level of illness.

Again, please do NOT walk in to the Health Center without contacting Nurse Lamb first for an assessment, unless you are experiencing one or more of the following warning signs:

- Trouble breathing
- Severe chest pain
- Fever over 103 degrees
- Confusion
- Pale skin color

If you develop the following symptoms, you are likely to have H1N1:

- Rapid onset of symptoms over a few hours
- Fever over 100 degrees
- Muscle aches (mostly in the lower back)
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Usually headache
- Perhaps nausea
- Perhaps dizziness

### **Student isolation**

Remember that the diagnosis of H1N1 influenza at the present time will be made based on your symptoms. Students who have symptoms will be asked to go home if they live within 2-3 hours of campus (most are being picked up by their parents). This is important as it: (1) gets ill people off campus to limit the spread of the disease and (2) there's no place like home to recuperate – TLC, home cooling, sleep/rest, etc.

For those who live farther away, you will be asked to isolate yourself in your room or designated sick room in your living unit (this should include a bathroom designated for ill students). There are downloadable signs on the Wabash H1N1 home page to post on doors. It is essential that you stay in your room and not venture out. If you can't arrange for meals to be brought to you by another student, please contact the Dean's Office.

If you are experiencing symptoms of influenza, let Nurse Lamb know and she will determine if you need to go home immediately without seeing the doctors. She will inform the Dean of Students Office that you are ill. If you become ill over a weekend and have typical symptoms, leave campus if you live within 2-3 hours, or isolate yourself if you live farther away, and get in contact with the Dean of Students Office the following Monday.

### **"I just feel a little sick"**

If you feel like you may be coming down with a respiratory illness (especially if you have a cough), we advise that you limit your contact with others as much as possible for a day or so to see if your symptoms worsen. You don't have to practice strict isolation – just be aware you may have influenza and may already be contagious to others.

### **When to return to campus/class**

We are asking students to remain at home or in isolation until their fever is below 100 for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. There is some evidence starting to appear that a person with influenza may still be able to spread the virus even when free of fever for this time period. If you are fever free and continue to feel ill, we recommend you not return to campus/class until you definitely feel your symptoms are improving.

### **"I've been exposed"**

Some students have come to the Health Center after being exposed to someone with influenza and they, "just want to be checked out to be safe." Please understand there is no way to look at someone and tell if he is going to develop influenza. By coming to the Health Center, these "worried" students are exposing themselves to other students that definitely have the illness. There is no medication we can provide, other than vaccination, that will protect you.

We are advising students not to sleep in close proximity to one another, such as in cold dorms. Influenza virus invades the respiratory tract more easily in cool temperatures. Fraternity walk outs are also a high risk situation for spread of the illness. Freshmen who are sick should not go on walk out.

RAs and fraternity officers should come by the Health Center or go to Campus Services to get surgical masks to have in the living unit for those who develop symptoms.

**Social activities**

Organizations should continue to be diligent to follow guidelines to limit the spread of the virus. In your daily hygiene, cleaning, and social interactions (with others on or off campus), be mindful of taking the precautions we continue to emphasize to you.

**When is that vaccine coming?**

You likely have read that the production and availability of vaccine is far behind what was predicted. I would anticipate that the vaccine will not be available to students until at least mid to late November. Even at that point, it will likely be a very limited supply.

Let's all do our best to stay healthy, or quickly recover. I believe you'll find the advice herein will help in that effort.

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John R. Roberts, M.D.  
Crawfordsville Family Care  
308 W. Market St.  
Crawfordsville, IN 47933  
765-362-5789