

H1N1 Update

We are receiving a lot of questions from our parents about H1N1 (swine flu), our preparation and policies, etc. This newsletter will provide some answers as well as information received from the CDC and St Johns County Health Department.

Yesterday I attended a meeting for childcare providers hosted by the epidemiologist for the St Johns County Health Department. (There are 88 providers in St Johns County and only 6 of us attended.) Some of the more interesting facts:

- The Health Department is no longer testing to see if symptoms are caused by H1N1 or some other type of influenza. The presumption is that greater than 90% of the cases currently presenting are, in fact, H1N1.
- Health departments will no longer try to close schools or businesses where an H1N1 outbreak occurs.
- The current expectation is that two (2) shots will be required, about 3 weeks apart, to provide sufficient immunity.
- It seems to be possible to contract H1N1 more than once; a child in St Johns County has now had it three separate times.
- The CDC priorities for the H1N1 vaccine are: “pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.”
- You can contract both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu at the same time!

The Health Department provided these guidelines for dealing with a suspected case of H1N1 at our school:

- If a child has a fever of 100° or more – even without secondary symptoms – they are to be separated from other children by at least 6 feet and their parents are to be called to take the child to the doctor.
- If possible, a mask should be put on the child to prevent further spread of droplets that are the carrier mechanism.
- We are *required* to immediately report to the health department even the suspicion that a child (or staff member) has H1N1.

What if your child contracts the disease? When can they return to school?

The CDC guideline is that the child can return to school 24 hours after the fever has passed, defined as no indication of fever and no use of drugs like Tylenol to mitigate that fever. The disease is communicable from 1 day prior to presenting symptoms to as much as 7 days after presenting symptoms.

The epidemiologist emphasized to us that there is essentially no way for you to protect yourself from exposure to this disease unless you live in a hermetically sealed

environment. Obviously, all of us spend part of each day out in the community where we will come in contact with H1N1. Here at Village Academy *North*, we can't stop H1N1 from coming into the building, so we are focused on minimizing the possibility that it can spread.

- Our teachers sanitize their rooms daily. This includes the toys, the table surfaces, sinks, and toilet facilities.
- If a child begins to show signs of illness, everything that child has touched will be immediately cleaned and sanitized
- Any sneeze is cause for an immediate cleanup of the area
- Handwashing protocols are strictly followed. We will also now require all children to sanitize their hands upon arrival (including after-school students).
- We are sanitizing every door knob, handle, toilet handle, etc., daily.
- We will change our policy regarding contacting the parents to conform to CDC guidelines. (100° fever without secondary symptoms)
- We are now bringing in an outside cleaning company to deep clean the facility each week.

What can you do to help?

- Get the seasonal flu shot now, and plan to get the H1N1 shot
- Parents should use the hand sanitizer by the front desk every time they come in the building
- Don't bring your child to school with any of the symptoms of the flu
- Don't bring your child back to school after a period of illness until all evidence of fever is gone for 24 hours

The Health Department has extended to us the chance to become a "Private Point of Dispensing Organization" or POD. That means the county will come here and administer H1N1 shots to the following group:

- All children between 6 months and 14 years old that attend here
- The siblings of those children
- The parents of children under 6 months of age (they can't have the vaccine)
- Our staff

There would be no charge for this service. We will be asking you for an expression of interest in the next couple of weeks.

For a good source of current information, try www.cdc.gov.

That's all we have for now. We'll provide more information when we have it.

Curt Weaver