



August 24, 2009

Dear Teachers and Staff:

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) would like your help in preparing for flu season. This fall, you and your students are likely to be exposed to both seasonal influenza (flu) and novel H1N1 influenza (formerly known as swine flu). The flu virus can be transmitted from person to person in your home, in community settings, and in schools if people infected with the virus come in very close contact with other people.

There are five very important steps you and your students can take to minimize your risks of becoming ill with flu.

1. Please remember to wash hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after you cough or sneeze. Please schedule time in the day for your students to wash their hands frequently, particularly before meals and before/after group activities.
2. When coughing or sneezing, please cover your mouth with a tissue or your sleeve. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Please also reinforce this with your students.
3. Please stay home from work, and ask your students to stay home from school when you or they are sick. Students and teachers who are ill with flu symptoms (a fever, accompanied with a cough or sore throat) need to remain home for at least 4 days from the time they become ill.
4. If one of your students appears to be ill please send the child immediately to the nurse or designated staff person in your building. Students who are ill with influenza-like illness should be isolated immediately from others to avoid possible transmission of the illness.
5. Please schedule an appointment or attend a clinic where you can receive your flu shots. Although at this point the H1N1 vaccine is not available, vaccination against seasonal flu is very important and offers protection against other strains of flu that are likely to circulate this fall and winter. Vaccination clinics across the city will begin in September.

To date, most cases of H1N1 influenza have occurred in children, and cases have fully recovered. However, influenza can cause serious illness, and cases of more severe illness in the future may occur. If you have a chronic medical condition, such as lung disease (including asthma), heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, a compromised immune system or cancer, or are pregnant, please call your medical provider to let them know if you have influenza like illness or if you have been in close contact with someone who has flu so that you can find out if there are additional precautions or medication to take. If there is a significant amount of flu circulating in your school or your community, and you are at high risk of complications for serious illness from influenza, your medical provider may advise you to stay home until there is less flu activity.

For more information about H1N1, call the Mayor's Health Line at 617- 534-5050 between 9 AM – 5 PM, or go to [www.bphc.org/H1N1flu](http://www.bphc.org/H1N1flu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Ferrer".

Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., MPH, M.Ed  
Executive Director