Pandemic Influenza Preparedness

# FACTSHEET

August 21, 2009

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
Ministry of Health Services
Ministry of Education

## TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT THE H1N1 FLU VIRUS

News reports can sometimes scare children because they often focus on worst-case situations. You can help ease your family's fears by providing them with accurate information. Here are a few tips for talking to your kids about the H1N1 flu virus:

- Initiate the conversation. Left to their own devices, children can come up with stories that are often more frightening than the reality.
- Ask them what they have heard. You can help to reassure them with facts.
- Keep explanations very simple for younger children.
- Assure your children that, while they may be concerned, there is no need to be afraid. The public health service and doctors and nurses are working hard to limit the spread of the disease and help people who may become sick.
- You can tell your kids that this new virus causes a sickness that is a lot like the flu that we see every year, but that more people may get sick because the virus is new.
- Let them know that even the most serious pandemic happened almost 100 years ago and, even then, almost everyone who became sick recovered. That was before people had access to the medical knowledge, care and medications that we have today.
- Although some people have become very sick and have needed to go into hospital, the majority of the people who got sick in North America got better at home
- Remind your kids of ways to avoid getting sick:
    - Wash your hands frequently, especially before eating and after coughing or sneezing;
    - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth;
    - Don't share the same cup or share utensils with other people;
    - Cough or sneeze into a tissue instead of your hands and then throw the tissue away or cough into your sleeve rather than your bare hands; and
    - That they can tell you if they don't feel well, and to stay home from school if they are sick.
- Be a role model! Adults should make sure they wash their hands properly and sneeze into a tissue or their elbow to set a good example for kids.

You can call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or are concerned about any illness/symptoms experienced by you or your children.

For the latest facts on the H1N1 flu virus, including back-to-school information, visit www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1.

Find us on twitter

Find us on Facebook