

August 31, 2009

Dear Pitt Student:

Welcome to a new school year of learning, growth, excitement —and challenges. Among the current challenges is the spread of the H1N1 flu virus (swine flu) that has occurred around the world since May and is now in the Pittsburgh area and on our campus.

We want to provide you with our best thinking on how we can work together to manage this flu season with the least discomfort and disruption for our campus community. Following the guidelines of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and in consultation with medical experts at the Allegheny County Health Department, Pitt's School of Public Health, and our partners at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, we have created a plan of action that will be most effective with your help.

The best ways to prevent yourself from being infected (and stop the spread of infection if you are sick) are fairly low-tech: Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze, dispose of used tissues, WASH YOUR HANDS often with soap and hot water, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

The H1N1 flu looks and feels like the seasonal flu we've experienced for many years. The symptoms that most people report who are infected with the H1N1 virus are: fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, body aches, and headache. Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea occur in some patients.

If you believe you have the H1N1 virus or have questions, immediately contact the H1N1 hotline at 412-624-2222 for guidance. This phone number operates 24/7 and will put you in touch with a health care provider. If you are experiencing H1N1's typical mild to moderate symptoms and are otherwise healthy, you will likely be instructed to get plenty of rest and fluids and take medications such as fever reducers and pain medications (acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen). You will also be told to self-isolate.

Self-isolating means you will return home to the care of your family to recuperate if you are within reasonable driving distance and have someone to drive you, or you will remain in your residence hall room or apartment and ask to have meals delivered to you. You should remain away from others until your fever has been gone for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medicine). A mask will be delivered to you so that you can wear it when anyone enters your room.

Obviously, students with flu symptoms should not attend classes, but should contact professors by e-mail or phone as soon as possible to alert them to the situation and explore ways in which to make up work or view course materials online, if available. Since most students with flu will not be seen by a doctor, a doctor's excuse for absences of typical duration will not be expected.

Medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) are recommended for treatment of H1N1 only in special circumstances; for example, in pregnant women, patients with high-risk medical conditions, and hospitalized and critically ill patients. If your roommate is told that he or she may have H1N1 and you have a chronic illness such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, are immunosuppressed due to a medical condition or medications, or are pregnant, then you should contact Student Health Service (412-383-1800) to schedule an appointment.

Warning signs that may indicate a more serious complication from H1N1 include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or stomach, sudden dizziness, severe or persistent vomiting, or flu-like

symptoms that temporarily improve but then return with fever and worse cough as this could be a sign of pneumonia. Any of these warning signs necessitate emergency medical care. But most otherwise healthy people will recover on their own within a week or so.

You can see updates on the status of H1N1 flu by using the link on Pitt's home page at [www.pitt.edu](http://www.pitt.edu).

I know this is a rather serious start to a wonderful time in your lives, but I am confident that with your vigilant adherence to the advice above and your respect for others, that we'll soon be corresponding not about illness but about positive developments in your academic careers.

Sincerely,

Kathy Humphrey

Vice Provost and Dean of Students