

September 22, 2009

Dear MedCentral College of Nursing Students,

Welcome back to campus! We are looking forward to another wonderful year at the MedCentral College of Nursing. As the autumn quarter begins, we are preparing for the prediction of a widespread H1N1 flu outbreak. As you probably have read, people under 24 years old are expected to be more highly susceptible to the H1N1 virus. We are taking several steps to educate our population, prevent the spread of the virus, and continue normal college functions during possible periods of student, faculty and staff absenteeism.

In order to prepare for the possibility of illness and prevent the spread of the virus, there are some things you can do to be better prepared:

- 1. Create your own "Flu Kit" before any illness.** Purchase non-aspirin fever-reducing medication (Tylenol, Advil, or similar brands), a thermometer, a decongestant, tissues, hand sanitizer, some surgical masks, soup, crackers, and decaffeinated tea or Gatorade type beverage.
- 2. Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.
- 3. Practice respiratory etiquette** by covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder when tissues are unavailable, not into your hands. Throw used tissues into the trash and don't reuse. The college has provided tissues and hand sanitizer throughout the campus for use; please use them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- 4. Get vaccinated for seasonal and H1N1 flu.** People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). The CDC has placed individuals under age 24 in the top priority group for receiving the H1N1 vaccine.
- 5. Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius. Look for possible signs of fever: if the person feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

If you do get the flu or flu-like illness the best course of action is to self-isolate in order to reduce the viral spread. Speak with your health care provider if you are at risk for complications. People with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or

diabetes), lowered immunity (such as cancer, HIV) and over age 65 are at greater risk. Anyone who experiences shortness of breath, increasing fever, chest pain or pressure or rapid breathing should seek prompt medical attention.

The following vaccinations are expected to be available fall 2009:

- **Seasonal Flu Vaccine:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Medcentral College of Nursing recommend that all students get vaccinated for the seasonal flu. Local pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreen Drug Stores, in addition to the Richland County Health Department are administering this vaccine during select times. The cost is approximately \$20.00.
- **Novel H1N1 Vaccine:** Recent recommendations from the CDC have placed individuals under age 24 in the top priority group for receiving the H1N1 vaccine. More information will be available in the coming weeks regarding how and when this vaccine will be given.

Students are to report (e-mail) influenza (flu) illness to their professor as soon as possible.

Links for addition influenza (flu) information:

1. <http://www.richlandhealth.org/health/index.html>
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/>
3. <http://www.flu.gov/>

Thank you,
Emergency Operation Committee
MedCentral College of Nursing