



H1N1 Memo to BC SCHOOL SPORTS MEMBER SCHOOLS

Date: November 2, 2009

To: BCSS Member School Principals, Athletic Directors, Coaches, Managers and Parents

From: Sue Keenan, Executive Director

Re: H1N1 Risk Management Protocol – School Athletics

Principals/Athletic Directors/Coaches/Managers/Parents:

The following information is intended to assist BCSS member schools address risks associated with the H1N1 virus. This document will be superseded by any information made available through BC Health Services, BC Education, your school board or other related bodies.

There have been a number of confirmed cases of H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) in British Columbia. H1N1 is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of regular human seasonal influenza. The virus is contagious to humans and it is believed to be spread by germs that are released into the air by coughs and sneezing and then breathed in by others. In addition, germs resting on hard surfaces such as counters and doorknobs are easily transmitted to the lungs by an individual touching a contaminated surface and then touching their mouth or nose.

Due to this being a genuine threat in our province, it is imperative that the BCSS and its member schools' athletic teams implement a protocol that is to be exercised by all teams participating this fall. The possibility of the spread of H1N1 will become more apparent as we move into the upcoming months and we want all schools to be prepared at all sporting events, including provincial championships.

Typical symptoms include (but are not limited to):

- Cough
- Fever/chill
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Body aches/headaches

- Vomiting and diarrhea

The following are guidelines for schools to consider as they prepare to minimize any outbreak:

- Provide sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies, such as soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products (60-90% alcohol, if approved by your school board), tissues and receptacles for their disposal
- Develop a dissemination plan for communication with staff, students, coaches, and families (e.g. The coach of the team will contact the student's parent/guardian)
- Prepare to consult with the public health region in your area in the event of an outbreak
- Establish policies for transporting ill students
- Encourage coaches to carry hand sanitizer with them at all times
- Clean shared-use equipment and common touch surfaces (e.g. Handrails, doorknobs, computer keyboards) regularly with household cleaner or disinfectant wipes
- Do not take or let any student athlete(s) or coach attend a mass gathering (tournament) if they are exhibiting signs of influenza-like illness
- Have an isolation/evacuation plan for any coach or student-athlete that may show signs of H1N1 once the team has embarked on a trip

Common prevention guidelines for all to follow:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, or use approved hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol, if approved by your school board)
- Stay home if you are sick. If your symptoms worsen, visit your doctor or a clinic immediately
- Do not share drinking glasses, water bottles, mouth guards or eating utensils
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth unless you have just washed your hands
- Cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve

The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend that masks be worn, nor do they think it necessary to cancel any events, games or trips. All normal practices are safe, as long as proper hygiene procedures are followed.

If anyone on a team has influenza-like symptoms or has been in contact with someone who has H1N1, it is important to avoid close contact with others for at least seven days after your symptoms start. We feel that this is the joint responsibility of parent, school administration and coaches, and it is critical to the health and safety of others as this is the time when the illness can be spread to others. Players who display influenza-like symptoms should be sent home immediately from practice and not allowed to play in games. Until symptoms appear in other individuals, activities should carry on as per usual.

Athletic Team Guidelines

BCSS is encouraging all principals, athletic directors and team coaches to be vigilant in taking the proper steps to ensure the health and well-being of themselves and their student athletes. Specifically, coaches/team managers are strongly encouraged to:

- Prevent the sharing of bottles among players: put numbers or player names on bottles
- Do NOT allow sharing of towels, clothing, bar soap and other personal items like razors
- Advocate frequent hand-washing and coughing into arm or sleeve
- Carry hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol, if approved by your school board) to tournaments and inform athletes on most effective way to use hand sanitizers for maximum benefit: Click here for proper hand sanitization techniques
- Talk with players and parents on their team about why it is important to keep sick players at home
- Monitor their players and immediately send home those who obviously display any flu-like symptoms
- Advise infected players or coaches/managers to avoid close contact with others (on team) for at least seven days after symptoms appear
- Promote “hands-off-the-face” protocol at all times
- Assist athletes in protecting their immune system by stressing they get sufficient sleep, do not over train and get proper nutrition

Click [here](#) for a one pager to share with your coaching staff.

Post Game: Due to the potential spread of the H1N1 virus, the BCSS is recommending that players do not shake hands at the end of each game until further notice. We would still like to have acknowledgement of teams and continue to exhibit sportsmanship, so we advise that teams still do walk bys, or line up opposite the other team, but rather than shaking hands, they clap for their opposing team.

Your cooperation is appreciated and it is hoped that adoption of these protocols will help keep coaching staff, student-athletes, spectators, officials and others healthy as well as the opponents that you may be facing in the weeks to follow.

H1N1 Risk Management Protocol for Coaches

It is recommended that all school athletic teams implement a protocol that is exercised by all teams participating in school athletic activities this fall. Please refer to the ASAA memo dated October 29, 2009 for detailed information on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 including signs and symptoms of the illness: www.asaa.ca . (The following information is adapted from Hockey Canada Guidelines developed by Dr. Mark Aubry, Chief Medical Officer, Hockey Canada):

Recommendations for coaches of school athletic teams:

- Prevent the sharing of bottles among players: put numbers or player names on bottles
- Do NOT allow sharing of towels, clothing, bar soap and other personal items like razors
- Advocate frequent hand-washing and coughing into arm or sleeve
- Carry hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol, if approved by your school board) to tournaments and inform athletes on most effective way to use hand sanitizers for maximum benefit: Click [here](#) for proper hand sanitization techniques
- Talk with players and parents about why it is important to keep sick players at home
- Monitor their players and immediately send home those who obviously display any flu-like symptoms
- Advise infected players or coaches/managers to avoid close contact with others (on team) for at least seven days after symptoms appear
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Respect and Sportsmanship (avoiding physical contact):

The ASAA would still like to encourage coaches to utilize every opportunity to allow their athletes to show respect for opponents and referees. However until the threat of H1N1 has abated (based on Alberta Health Services advisories), the recommended procedure to be used at ASAA Provincial Championships is as follows:

Pre-game: recommended for coaches and captains to greet referees and opposing coach/captain verbally

Post game: No handshakes. Recommended options:

- a) line up opposite other team; take turns implementing a hand clap for other team and referees
- OR**
- b) line up and walk past other team/referees as you would normally do, clapping as you walk by

Post Game Hygiene: immediate hand washing or hand sanitization recommended

H1N1 INFLUENZA

This pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus is thought to be spread from person-to-person in the same way as seasonal influenza where transmission occurs predominantly through droplets produced from coughing or sneezing. Indirect transmission also likely occurs through self-inoculation after contact with surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus from infected persons.

SYMPTOMS

COUGHING
FEVER
FATIGUE
MUSCLE ACHES
SORE THROAT
HEADACHES
DECREASED APPETITE
RUNNY NOSE
NAUSEA
VOMITING
DIARRHEA

HAND WASHING TECHNIQUES

WITH RUNNING WATER:

- Remove gloves, jewelry, sport taping, etc.
- Wet your hands up to the wrists
- Apply enough *anti-bacterial* soap to cover all hand surfaces
- Work soap under the fingernails and around and between joints and fingers
- Rinse off every trace of lather with water
- Dry your hands with a clean cloth or paper towel while taking special care to dry thoroughly between the fingers
- Turn off the tap/spout with a paper towel or cloth
- Repeat as many times a day as possible

WITH AN ALCOHOL-BASED SANITIZER:

- Wash your hands with soap and water (if available) to remove visible dirt such as oil, blood, body fluids, etc., and dry your hands completely after washing
- Place enough alcohol-based (if approved by your school board) hand rub into the cupped palm of one hand sufficient to wet both hands completely
- Rub the liquid into the palms, back of hands, between fingers and under nails

COUGH & SNEEZE ETIQUETTE

The influenza virus spreads quickly from person to person through droplets in the air. These droplets come from our noses and mouths when we cough or sneeze, so cover your mouth with a tissue or raise your arm up to your face to cough or sneeze into your sleeve. If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and wash your hands immediately.

EVENT PREPARATION

- Provide sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies, such as soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products (if approved by your school board), tissues, and receptacles for their disposal
- Develop a dissemination plan for communication with staff, students, and families (ex: the coach of a team will contact the student's parent/guardian)
- Prepare to consult with the public health region in your area in the event of an outbreak
- Plan for an isolation room if a student is showing symptoms of or is infected with the H1N1 virus
- Establish policies for transporting ill students
- Encourage coaches to carry hand sanitizer with them at all times

PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGES

- Individuals who have an underlying illness that puts them at risk for severe illness or complications from the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus may wish to consider not attending mass gatherings because of their own personal risk
- Practice frequent hand cleaning (i.e., after sneezing or coughing, before and after eating, after recreation times, after going to the washroom, etc.)
- Do not share cups
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette
- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer
- Keep your hands away from your face – "Hands-off-the-Face" protocol
- Cough and sneeze into your arm, not your hand. If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and wash your hands
- Get immunized
- Keep common surface areas—for example, doorknobs, light switches, telephones and keyboards—clean and disinfected
- Eat healthy foods and stay physically active to keep your immune system strong
- Keep doing what you normally do, but if you get sick, stay home
- Talk to a health professional if you experience severe flu-like symptoms