



## Epidemiology Unit

### Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition

231, De Saram Place, Colombo 01000, Sri Lanka

Tele: (+94 11) 2695112, 4740490, 4740491, 4740492 2681548 Fax: (+94 11) 2696583 E-mail: [chepid@slt.net.lk](mailto:chepid@slt.net.lk), [epidunit@slt.net.lk](mailto:epidunit@slt.net.lk) Web: [www.epid.gov.lk](http://www.epid.gov.lk)

---

21<sup>st</sup> October 2009

## Message to Schools

### Pandemic Influenza (H1N1) 2009 Outbreak

This disease is **generally a mild illness** similar to seasonal flu'. Its symptoms usually include fever, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, cough, headache and muscle or joint pains. These symptoms may last for a few days up to a week and may not require specific anti viral treatment.

All patients with suspected H1N1 influenza attending to hospitals (government/private) will be screened to assess their illness and only patients with severe or progressive symptoms will be admitted to hospitals for laboratory diagnosis and treatment with specific anti virals. Those with mild illness would be managed as out patients with supportive medication and directed for home care.

The following measures are advised for schools during a possible H1N1 outbreak among the school population.

1. Try to avoid mass gathering of students e.g. assemblies, concerts
2. Move students and staff who have symptoms of influenza (flu') at school to a separate room until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.
3. Advise students with symptoms to stay at home without attending school or tuition classes (or other public crowded places). Sick persons should stay at home for 7 days or until at least 24 hours after their symptoms subside.
4. Advise them to limit contact with other family members, have bed rest, drink lots of fluids and to eat normally
5. Advise them to seek medical advice if their symptoms worsen or if they get any of the conditions below:
  - Fast breathing or trouble breathing
  - Not drinking enough fluids
  - Reduced urine output

Severe or persistent vomiting

Being irritable

Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen

Sudden dizziness

Confusion

Flu-like symptoms improving but then to return with fever and worse cough

6. Educate and encourage students and staff to practise good hand hygiene during school hours. Good hygiene means washing hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing.
7. Remind teachers, staff, and students to practice respiratory etiquette. The main way that the flu spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, therefore it is important to cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or handkerchief when coughing or sneezing. Or one can cough or sneeze into the elbow or shoulder, not into hands.
8. Make arrangements to clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
9. Closure of schools is not routinely recommended and such a decision will have to be taken with concurrence of educational authorities

**Dr Paba Palihawadana**  
**Chief Epidemiologist**  
**Epidemiology Unit**