

MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The staff at the Center for Health and Wellness (**CHW**) hopes you have enjoyed a healthy, relaxing, and productive summer. We have been preparing for the start of the new academic year with particular attention to the H1N1 virus and want to share some basic information and resources to help you minimize your risk of infection, and be more prepared if you do become ill. For starters, we ask you to partner with us by preparing a **“Just in Case Flu Kit” as part of your back-to-school supplies** (see below for **Kit** items).

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) have all issued recommendations to colleges and universities about minimizing transmission of the virus, treatment options for those who contract it, and ways to lessen the impact that Influenza-like Illnesses (ILI’s) may have on the community and your own academic success!

One of the recommendations is to isolate individuals who contract the H1N1 virus during the period when they are contagious. Emerson is committed to following such recommendations, but like most colleges we have limited options to isolate residential students who come down with a communicable disease. Thus, we encourage students living in on-campus housing to talk with their parents/family about having an alternate plan in place (if possible) for recuperation away from the campus (returning home or staying with a nearby relative or friend) if one becomes ill for the duration of the recommended isolation period.

The Center for Health and Wellness will be following the recommendations of the BPHC. We will be communicating updated campus information and links to the most current and reliable resources at our website: www.emerson.edu/health_center . Please refer to the links on this site for detailed information regarding the bulleted points below.

The Center for Health and Wellness will sponsor flu clinics during the fall semester. When the vaccine(s) for seasonal flu and H1N1 become available, notices will be posted on eCampus and on our website for Immunization Clinic Dates/Times. Vaccines received from the state or CDC will be administered based on their priority guidelines.

If you have a chronic medical condition that requires daily medication, are immune-suppressed, pregnant, receiving chemotherapy, asplenic, or a smoker, please notify the Center for Health and Wellness by registering at healthservices@emerson.edu. (Please provide your name, student ID, contact information, and a brief statement of your medical condition.) We will be maintaining a listing of students who may meet the high-risk criteria for vaccination as determined by the CDC. **Please note:** Guidelines and recommendations are revised by the CDC based on the activity of the virus and severity of illness.

General Tips for Staying Healthy

- The best way to prevent the flu is to get the flu vaccine every year.
- If you are a smoker, now is a great time to quit. Smokers are at higher risk of infection and complications if they become ill. Contact the Center for Health and Wellness for an appointment to assist your quitting efforts.
- The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The flu shot is for everyone 6 months of age and older, including pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions.
- The flu vaccine that you get every year **does not protect you against H1N1 flu.**
- Pneumococcal vaccine (pneumonia shot) may be recommended for you if you have a medical condition like diabetes, heart or lung disease, or a weak immune system, or if you are 65 years of age or older. Ask your health care provider if you should get the pneumococcal vaccine.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Throw tissues away and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. This decreases the chance that you will get the flu virus or other germs into your body, or that you will pass the flu to others.
- Use a household disinfectant product to clean things that are touched often, such as door or refrigerator handles, computer keyboards/mouse, phones, and water faucets.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick. (Keep a distance of three to six feet away if possible.)
- Avoid unnecessary hand-holding or -touching and kissing or sharing food, dishes, and glasses with anyone who has a cold or the flu.
- If you have young children, a weak immune system, or a chronic illness, avoid large crowds, if possible.

Basic Influenza Facts

- Influenza viruses are contagious and spread through droplets of the virus entering your nose, eyes, or upper respiratory system. This can be from direct cough or sneeze exposure or by touching the virus on the infected person's mouth/hands or surfaces contaminated by the cough/sneeze.
- Typically the "Seasonal" Influenza season begins in late fall and runs through the spring.
- This year things are more complex with the **H1N1** virus currently circulating worldwide with symptoms similar to seasonal influenza (flu).
- Symptoms of the flu may include: fever, muscle aches, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, or headache.

- Individuals with a fever of **100°F (37.7°C)** and either a **cough or sore throat** are considered to have an Influenza-like Illness (ILI). ***Individual testing for H1N1 is no longer performed routinely as its presence in the community has been well established.***
- In many instances, individuals with ILI's can manage their illness with self-care measures and minimal or no medical intervention. The ***“Just in Case Flu Kit”*** can come in handy here.

“Just in Case Flu Kit”

Prepare a “Just in Case Flu Kit.” It can be useful when caring for yourself or someone with the flu. Many of these supplies can be found at the supermarket, convenience store, or drugstore. Include the following supplies:

- Two large zip-lock bags—one to hold supplies, the other for trash
- Digital thermometer for checking body temperature
- Soap for washing hands or alcohol-based hand sanitizer such as Purell® or a store brand for cleaning hands
- Over-the counter medicines:
 - Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol® or a store brand)
 - Ibuprofen (such as Advil®, Motrin®, or a store brand)
- Cough and cold medicine—decongestant, expectorant, cough suppressant
- Tissues
- Throat lozenges
- Salt packets
- Two 1-liter bottles of water and/or Gatorade®
- Instant soups/broths
- Foods that are easy to digest (such as oatmeal, applesauce, and rice)
- Tea bags
- Cotton bandana—to cover your nose and mouth
- Household disinfectant to clean surfaces
- Paper towels for cleaning and hand washing
- Trash bags to line waste baskets
- An extra supply of special foods, medicine, or equipment that are needed by you or family members due to any chronic illnesses

If You Do Get Sick

- Isolate yourself from others and if you do need to leave your residence hall room or apartment to seek medical care wear a bandana or face mask to protect others from exposure to the virus.
- Take your temperature.
- **Call your health care provider or Center for Health and Wellness** if you are experiencing any of the medical symptoms listed in the “When to Seek Medical Attention” section below.

- Stay out of class, work, athletics, or social settings if you are ill.
- Follow the guidelines here and refer to the resource listing below for more specific information.

How to Take a Temperature

When taking a temperature, it is important to remember the following:

- Always clean a reusable thermometer with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer before and after each use.
- Every time you take a temperature, write down the time, temperature reading, and the type and amount of medicine taken (if any).
- If you've been using medicine to bring down the fever, take your temperature before the next dose is due.
- The length of time to measure a temperature depends on the type of thermometer you use. Read the manufacturer's instructions for details.
- Disposable thermometers with instructions are posted on each floor in the residence halls and on the bulletin board outside of the Center for Health and Wellness.
- Do not drink any liquid for at least 15 minutes before taking your temperature.
- Place the thermometer under the tongue toward the back of the mouth. Close your mouth and do not bite down on the thermometer.
- Hold the thermometer for the amount of time written in the manufacturer's directions.
- Normal temperature ranges by mouth: 95.9°–99.5°F (35.5°–37.5°C) and usually is lower on first awakening and higher later in day.

Fever and the Flu

- Fever is a higher than normal body temperature. It is the most common symptom of the flu. Although fever may cause worry, it helps the body fight infection and is usually not harmful. Normal temperature range by mouth: 95.9°–99.5°F or 35.5°–37.5°C.

If you have flu, you may experience a fever that:

- Increases quickly, rising to a peak of 101°–104° F (38.3°–40°C) within 12–24 hours;
- Comes and goes, especially if medicines are used to treat it;
- Typically lasts three to five days.

Treatment

Teens and adults with a temperature below 101°F (38.3°C) probably do not need to be treated for fever, unless uncomfortable.

Things you can do to keep comfortable with fever:

- Keep the room comfortably cool.
- Wear lightweight clothing.
- Drink fluids, such as water or diluted fruit juices.
- Take a lukewarm shower, especially if:
 - Temperature is above 104°F (40°C)
 - Unable to take medicine because of vomiting
 - Have had a seizure caused by fever in the past

Do not use cold water, which can cause shivering and make the fever worse.

Do not use rubbing alcohol to try to bring down someone's temperature. Alcohol can be absorbed through the skin and cause health problems.

Medication

Fever-reducing medicines can be used if the person is uncomfortable. Use medicine that is right for the person's age and follow label directions carefully. These medicines are safe and effective if given correctly. Do not use the following medications if they have caused an allergic reaction in the past:

- Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol® or a store brand
- Ibuprofen, such as Advil®, Motrin®, or a store brand

Never give aspirin to someone younger than 19 years old unless recommended by a doctor.

Dehydration and the Flu

When you lose more water than you take in, you can become dehydrated. Fever, vomiting, and diarrhea may make dehydration worse.

Signs of Mild or Moderate Dehydration

- Feeling more thirsty
- Very dry mouth
- Less urination or darker urine
- Slight dizziness or lightheadedness
- Headache

How to Prevent and Treat Dehydration

- Drink plenty of water, fruit and vegetable juices, soups and broths, and beverages such as Gatorade® or a store brand. Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Drink small amounts of fluid often; dehydration can occur very quickly.

Watch carefully for signs that dehydration is getting worse. Call your healthcare provider if there are any unusual symptoms that concern you.

When to Seek Medical Attention

Severe dehydration (not having enough fluid in the body) is a medical emergency. A person with severe dehydration may need fluids intravenously (through a needle in the arm) in a clinic or hospital. While you are waiting for medical help, continue to drink fluids in small amounts often. **Get emergency medical care if you have any of these symptoms.**

- Difficulty breathing
- Extreme irritability, decreased alertness, speech changes, confusion, or unconsciousness
- Muscle weakness and fast heart rate

Call your healthcare clinician immediately if you have:

- Extreme thirst
- Very dry mouth or inside of nose, or skin does not bounce back to normal if it is gently pinched
- Little or no urination
- Weight loss
- Fast heart rate
- Very low activity level

When calling your health care clinician provide the following information:

1. Name and student or health plan ID #
2. Main reason you are calling
3. Age
4. Temperature
5. Main symptoms
6. How long have you (student) been feeling sick?
7. Any breathing problems? Fast breathing or shortness of breath?
8. Do you have a headache?
9. Vomiting? If yes, how long?
10. Drinking fluids? If not, for how long?
11. Eating normally?
12. Sleeping normally?
13. What have you done to treat the illness?
14. Have you (student) traveled in the last week to 10 days? Where? When? With whom?
15. Report chronic illnesses or medical conditions.
16. If female: are you or could you be pregnant?
17. List medicines for other illnesses or conditions.
18. Anyone else in the family sick? Roommate? Who? How long? What symptoms?

Resources

Mass Department of Public Health

www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/swineflu/

Boston Public Health Commission

www.bphc.org