

Suggested Letter template for:

PATIENTS AT HIGH RISK FOR INFLUENZA COMPLICATIONS and their caregivers

Sections in red are to be customized by your office.

Dear Parent/ Dear Patient:

With the start of the school year, we have seen more cases of the **2009 H1N1 Flu** virus infection. **H1N1** refers to the specific type of influenza virus that has spread throughout the world (creating a “pandemic”). You may also see it called “**Swine Flu.**” The staff at this clinic are working hard to provide the best and safest treatment to you, as this virus spreads in the community.

We want you to have this information because we know some people are worried when they hear so much in the news about the pandemic H1N1 virus. The virus is active in a number of BC communities and causing more people to be sick than the usual influenza that we see each fall and winter. Most people who get sick will recover within one week and just need to take good care of themselves at home.

The Provincial Health Officer (the doctor who is in charge of Public Health in BC) would like **the parents of children/people** with your condition to know that they could get sicker than average, or have complications from H1N1 influenza. For some **children/people**, medication called **Tamiflu** can help prevent this more serious illness, if it is taken soon after the illness starts. Talk to your **family doctor, pediatrician, specialist or our clinic nurse** now for more information about whether Tamiflu might be helpful for you, if you get sick with pandemic H1N1 in the coming months.

Tamiflu is a prescription medicine that reduces the activity of the virus in your body. It can be prescribed after discussion with **family doctor, pediatrician or our clinic nurse**. You may decide together to be prepared by having a pre-written prescription so that you can get the medication sooner, in case it is needed.

People who have got sick with H1N1 may start with a sore throat, headache, or a new cough, but usually feel quite sick on the first day or two. Influenza is different from the common cold because you may have a fever (not as common in those over age 65, or in children under the age of 6) and usually you will have quite achy muscles or joints. Some people, especially children, can also have vomiting and diarrhea, and may not have the cough. Most people feel exhausted. It is a great idea to stay home, rest and take care of yourself, and not go out where you would likely spread the virus to other people.

There is no way that you can tell for sure if your illness is from the pandemic H1N1 virus or from the many other viruses that can make people sick this time of year.

If you/your child develops these symptoms, in particular if the fever lasts for more than 24 hours, please contact your family doctor, pediatrician, specialist or call the ----- Clinic Nurse during regular office hours (Monday – Friday 8am – 4pm) The on call service is available 24/7 at ----- . Please phone ahead to your doctor’s office or clinic if you need to visit.

It will help you recover faster if you drink plenty of liquids rest, and get as much sleep as possible. Contact your doctor for advice if you have vomiting/diarrhea.

Fever can be treated with acetaminophen (one brand is Tylenol). Avoid Aspirin, and any medication containing salicylates for anyone under the age of 16.

Someone who is infected may spread the virus to others nearby by coughing or sneezing, especially if they have not learned the good health practice of using a tissue, or coughing into their sleeve/elbow.

Reducing the spread of the infection among family members is generally helped by avoiding ill people or crowded areas when many people in the community are sick. It is best to avoid touching your nose and eyes, and frequently to wash your hands with soap and water, or to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

We strongly encourage your entire household to get the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available later in the fall. Right now we are **only** recommending vaccination with the usual seasonal flu vaccine for people over age 65. Seasonal vaccine will then be available for all later in the year. If these recommendations change, we will let you know.

The Ministry of Health Services has created a website specifically for H1N1 with information about the virus and tips for prevention and spread of infection. <http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/>

We are committed to providing you with the best medical care possible. If you have any questions please contact our [clinic nursing office at XXXXXXXX](#).

Sincerely,