

Sept. 11, 2009

Dear Directors of Sporting Organizations:

As you may know, H1N1 has caused a global pandemic. While to date most cases of this virus resemble seasonal flu, there have been some severe cases and even deaths in Canada. Young people are among those hardest hit by this virus.

The advice we're giving the general public to avoid the H1N1 virus, and other illnesses, also applies to athletes and those involved with sports in their communities. It is important for everyone, both at home, at work and at play, to follow these simple hygiene tips to help avoid getting sick:

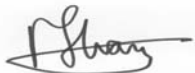
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Bring alcohol-based hand sanitizer with you to competitions and training as well as festivals, concerts and other events where soap and water may not be readily available;
- Don't share water bottles or other drinking/eating utensils with other athletes;
- Cough into your arm or sleeve. Tissues can be used to cover coughs and sneezes, but be sure to wash your hands after throwing out the tissue;
- Clean shared-use equipment and common touch surfaces (e.g. handrails, door knobs, computer keyboards) regularly with household cleaner or disinfectant wipes.

It is not necessary to cancel any events, games or trips. It's also not necessary to advise players not to shake hands at the end of a game. All normal practices are safe, as long as proper hygiene procedures are followed.

Athletes, coaches, organizers and support staff who develop flu-like symptoms (fever and/or cough with one or more of the following: sore throat, head/joint or muscle aches, unusual tiredness) should be advised to stay home until they are feeling well and able to resume normal activities. This means that anyone with flu-like symptoms should not be participating or attending practices, games or other events.

The H1N1 pandemic is an evolving issue and Public Health recommendations may change. Staying up to date as the H1N1 pandemic evolves is critical. The latest information is available at www.gov.ns.ca/hpp.

Sincerely,



Robert Strang MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Public Health Officer